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The  
Appreciation of English

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# The Appreciation of English

BEING SOME NOTES ON  
SPEAKING, READING, WRITING

WITH A NOTE ON THE ART OF  
**THE ESSAY**  
AND NUMEROUS  
**PASSAGES FOR STUDY**

BY

**L. A. MORRISON**

*(Army Educational Corps)*



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## FOREWORD

ENGLISH is easily the most important part of the new educational curriculum. That it is so judged now by, for one, the Army Educational Authorities, is proved by the time they have allotted (and rightly allotted) to English in the recent examination papers.

That is as it should be. But too often English has been a scrappy, arid business, without a rivulet of light to irrigate its barren dullness. Too often it has been a mental oakum-picking. Let me quote Mr. W. S. Tomkinson :<sup>1</sup>

It (the study of English) humanises the entire work of the school ; and is competent, as the faithful are persuaded, to " open new windows " in the national soul. It provides the spiritual adventure which man must needs seek, or become as the beasts that perish ; and which so many men pursue in base and ignoble ways. It is in addition to an intellectual discipline, what, at least, is of equal importance—a discipline for the emotions. It ministers to the love of beauty which is born in the hearts of children and too often, alas, dies, when

" Shades of the prison house begin to close  
Upon the growing boy."

<sup>1</sup> *The Teaching of English* (O.U.P.).



## FOREWORD

It ensures, in prose and verse exercises, an outlet for his creative instinct, he expresses himself as does the artist and the craftsman. And it gives him an æsthetic standard whereby he may judge between the mean and the lovely.

English was the part of the old educational curriculum upon which critics could, with most justice, place their fingers as the weakest. For to write something miscalled an "essay," which was correct in grammar, punctuation, and spelling, but which was utterly devoid of all originality, depth, power, and personality, was to reap the highest reward. Technical performance was at a premium, creative promise at a discount. However, now that the Committee on English and the educational authorities have so signally recognised that the man himself is more important than his clothes, and the substance of English more worthy of attention than commas or catch-spellings, the point need not further be laboured

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## INTRODUCTION

THE rules and formulæ of Mathematics and the grammar of English are all very well ; but they are not everything, and have much less relative significance than one might be led to suppose. They are like, however, to become everything, if we are to be guided by the average text-book. Rules and regulations have been considered the *teachable* parts of their subjects, and have therefore bulked large in the guide-books, whilst the larger, the æsthetic issues—intelligent deduction in Mathematics, the ability to speak well, read fruitfully, and write imaginatively in English—have been somewhat ignored. In the result we find pupils who can “ parse ” ; who know what that formidable thing, a “ Nominative Absolute ” is ; yet who cannot explain a process, tell a story, relate an incident, give evidence, or apply for leave of absence, clearly, logically, and pleasantly ; and who, perhaps, are accustomed to deliver themselves of a stanza of the “ Ancient Mariner ” in this manner :

The silly buckits *on* the deck,  
That 'ed so laung remined,  
Oi dremp't that they were filled wiv' doo ;  
And w'en oi awoke, it rined.

## INTRODUCTION

It is to be feared that there are many teachers also who cannot see the wood for the trees—the whole of a subject for its technical requirements. It is with the object of assisting in some small measure to correct this tendency that this little book is written. The “grammar business,” the “tricks of the trade,” have been omitted, for there are many excellent modern text-books based on the recommendation of the committees on the Teaching of English and on Grammatical Terminology which will give all that (and more than) is required. The essentials in these days of tongue-tied, sheepish, unimaginative pupils, are—

SPEAKING,  
READING,  
and  
WRITING,

*in that order.* Pupils must learn to speak well and read fruitfully before they can be expected to write at all. The preparatory groundwork for composition must be speaking and reading. Thus only can pupils be “brought out,” their interest awakened, quickened and sustained. To fling such a task at a reserved, tongue-tied, untutored person as, “Write an essay on ‘My Ambition in Life,’ or on ‘A

## INTRODUCTION

September Morn,' or on 'The Nature of Modern Warfare,' " is to appal him at the outset and to cause him to withdraw into the thickets of himself, perhaps for ever and a day.

I have not thought it necessary to deal specially with Speaking. Suffice it to say that Speaking is immensely important, not for the immediate purpose alone, but for the pupil's other occupations and for his after-career, and especially so where the pupil is backward. Careless speech will betray itself in careless writing. Teachers must inculcate by personal example clear and distinct articulation and pure, pleasant intonation, paying, of course, particular attention to the vowel-sounds, which give language its colour, its meaning, and its infinite variety. Oral composition in describing objects, incidents, scenes, and pictures; debates and dramatic renderings; and reading aloud from the Bible, the classics, and current periodicals will be found to be the best means of getting pupils not only to speak well, but to express themselves; and will bring the day of facility in written composition appreciably nearer.



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## PART I

# The Appreciation of English

### THE MAGIC REALM

LET us part the veil for a moment and peep into that strange Elysium which artists have made their own—the magic realm where Literature is conceived. The first difference we find is that “A loving Heart is the beginning of all Knowledge”; and that education is not so much concerned with livelihood as with living. Things are not counted in the language of £. s. and d., for the coinage of the realm is Sweetness and Light. Each inhabitant is a lord of kingdoms, with Beauty, in the words of Feverel, as his handmaid, History his minister, Time his harper, and sweet Romance his bride. And it is all strangely fascinating and attractive:—

Column, tower, and dome, and spire  
Shine like obelisks of fire,  
Pointing with inconstant motion  
From the altar of dark ocean  
To the sapphire-tinted skies.

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

All kinds of sweet flowers are growing on the rocks, bright green moss, with pale pink starry flowers, soft belled gentians, and pure white lilies ; and a primrose is not merely a primrose there, not just a botanical specimen :—

A primrose by a river's brim  
A Dicotyledon is to him,  
And it is nothing more !

but a faery horn, a lamp to the innocent feet, a *beau geste* of God. Everything is seen as a symbol of life, of the Immanence Divine :—

For there is never day so still,  
So lulled to sleep, but some light breeze,  
Unnoticed else, doth faintly fill  
The topmost foliage of the trees,  
And those tall tapering crests are stirred,  
And the eternal whisper heard.

And the night, too, breathes vastly down like a brooding benison on the day just gone, and the packed bellying clouds that move slowly across high heaven—what are they but

that           The hunched camels of the night  
Trouble the bright  
And silver waters of the moon ?

## THE MAGIC REALM

and what do they matter ?—

The Maiden of the Morn will soon  
Through Heaven stray and sing,  
Star-gathering !

And then, when "Morning in the bowl of Night  
has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to flight,"  
in what amazement we shall stand, "breathless  
with adoration !" At our feet

violets dim

But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,  
Or Cytherea's breath,

and about us the busy bees, "magic murmuring,"  
piling up their honeycombs

Like singing masons building roofs of gold,  
and, borne faintly on the wings of the wind, the  
sound of

the water lapping on the crag

And the long ripple washing in the reeds.

Everything we see and hear will be weighted with  
meaning, calling to something that will respond  
within us, until we shall feel ourselves, at last,  
in tune with the Infinite.

You may call this other world what you will.

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

You may dub it Man's spiritual existence, where Reason sits enthroned, governing and directing Man's instincts to their appropriate ends ; you may label it the battleground of his intellectual forces, whose continual conflict is to be taken as a sign of spiritual health and mental alertness ; or it may content you to call it the meadows of the flowers of the Mind, traversed by the three avenues of approach—Truth, Beauty and Goodness—to the Everest of endeavour : Manhood, after the image of God.

Or, sceptical, you may believe it to be none of these things, but "only a Romance." In a preface to *John Inglesant* the same incredulity was revealed. Perhaps the reply is as meet here as in the page whence it comes. It runs :—

Let us try to catch something of the skill of the great masters of Romance, of Cervantes and Le Sage ; of Goethe and Jean Paul, and let us unite to it the most stirring thoughts and speculations which have stirred mankind. . . .

"But," you say, "it is only a Romance."

True. It is only human life in the "highways and hedges," and in "the streets and lanes of

## THE MAGIC REALM

the city," with the ceaseless throbbing of its quivering heart; it is only daily life from the workshop, from the court, from the market, and from the stage; it is only kindness and neighbourhood and child-life, and the fresh wind of heaven, and the waste of sea and forest, and the sunbreak upon the stainless peaks, and contempt of wrong and pain and death; and the passionate yearning for the face of God, and woman's tears, and woman's self-sacrifice and devotion, and woman's love. Yes, it is only a Romance. It is only the ivory gates falling back at the fairy touch. It is only the leaden sky breaking for a moment above the bowed and weary head, revealing the fathomless Infinite through the gloom. It is only a Romance.

It is foreign land to too many, alas! But to him who takes courage in his hands, who builds, brick by brick, his house there, it will in time be all joy. His eyes will gain a new perceptivity, an acuter power of discernment of the latent, spiritualising loveliness beneath the common-place of things. His emotions will be sublimated to nobler ends; while his soul, steeped in the myrrh

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

and frankincense of a more fragrant earth than he knew, will unfold in its etherealised atmosphere like a flower in the sun.

From harmony, from heavenly harmony

This Universal frame began :

From harmony to harmony

Through all the compass of the notes it ran,

The diapason closing full in Man.



## READING

THE key to this mind-life, this magic realm of rational enchantment, is the appreciation of English. By appreciation is meant the stirring of the artistic sensibilities, through perceptions gained and impressions received in reading, observation, and experience, firstly to feeling and then to thought, to emotional experience of the beauty of truth and then to pure contemplation of it ; finally to creation itself.

The first step towards the appreciation of English is to read—to read widely and profoundly, to read with all the senses, to read till impressions and perceptions are accumulated and stored, and the mind thereby enriched and fecundated.

But that is the last step of all. Let us take things in their turn. The reader will, on beginning to read, encounter matter and manner—the content of the author's thought, and the words in which it is presented. The content of the words will appeal to him by its truth, the depth and power of its absolute realism ; while the words in which it is



## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

conveyed will capture and enrapture by their intrinsic grace and felicity, and, simultaneously, by their perfect suitability. Yet the matter and manner will not, in reality, be found to be capable of this division into terms ; for, on the written page before the reader, the two of them are one. And the first reading will be a study of how inextricably interwoven are they both, like the colour and texture of fine raiment, so that the mind does not accept for perpetuity the one in the absence of the other—the deep and original thought without the perfect and beautiful language that should convey it—

For of the soul the body form doth take,  
For soul is form and doth the body make.

They are indivisible—a true marriage of meaning and music that arouses the sensibilities, the appreciative faculties, by feeling and thought ; for the style in which the matter is presented is the expression of the author's own inimitable view of life in relation to himself—

*Le style, est de l'homme meme—*

the ineffaceable stamp of his (more or less) divine personality.

The form of style is therefore the *state of being* of the writer's thoughts ; and the more perfect their state of being the more readily acceptable will they be by the reader. Hence will the author's purpose be achieved ; for while the substance of a book may be calculated to flood the dark caverns of the groping mind with intellectual light, the mind will not in the first instance open to its reception unless persuaded by the emotional appeal of the style.

The style, then, is an emotional matter—its appeal is to the feelings, and it is an emotional experience. But so is the content, at first, an emotional experience. And an emotional experience is what the reader receives first in reading. He *feels* the beauty of the style, he *feels* the shock of the truth of the matter, its depth and power and seeming startling originality and age-old verity. But he does not stop there—at feeling. The experience is also an impulsive one. He is impelled (or should be) to thought, to a calm, pursuing contemplation altogether detached from his personal emotions at first contact with the matter and manner. He will (as they say) react from the experience. From feeling he has passed to thought. He meditates

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

upon the concepts conveyed. He analyses them. Even he criticises them, for criticism is but a part of the appreciative whole. Finally, he accepts them into his mind.

The reading has been a matter of eye and ear. The reader brings both. Simultaneously with seeing with his eye he hearkens with his ear, for of the two collateral channels by which appreciation comes to him that of sound is as important as that of sight. And, by seeing and hearing, he will arrive at an instantaneous understanding and acceptance of such a passage as this, of Edward Thomas :

All the life of the summer day became silent after sundown ; the earth was dark and very still as with a great thought ; the sky was as a pale window through which men and angels looked at one another without a word.

He will feel that, and it will move him to thought. He will appreciate it.

So, by eye and by ear in reading, will appreciation come to him. As a stern duty imposed upon him shall he first take up a book ; as a great joy gifted to him shall he continue to read many books ; for genuine gratification only comes from doing one's

duty so well as to derive pleasure from its performance ; as a conscientious artisan is thrilled by the keen constructive delight of his apparently laborious task. Dutiful reading will become pleasurable reading ; and pleasurable reading is appreciative reading.

“What to read” is now no longer a problem. For if the body and soul of a book thus satisfy the emotions and the intellect, giving food for reflection and stimulus to the imagination, awakening and sustaining an interest that is altogether wholesome and happy, it is, decidedly, a book to read.

There is only one form of reading to guard against : the reading that is an opiate, that softens the marrow, dulls the senses, obfuscates the vision. A narcotic book is like the air at some notorious resorts or at a too, too Trouville : it is “too relaxing.”

Finally, let the reader go to a good book as an architect's pupil might approach a fine building. Let him appraise the whole, the rare and venerable and time-mellowed masterpiece, as it appears to him in decent perspective. Let him step nearer, be it with bared head. Let him study closely in what its pleasingness consists, its seeming fragility and yet its unquestionable antiquity. Let him

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

examine and analyse foundation and ornament, rock-bottom truth and appropriate fantasy, as the architect's pupil would note base and dome and plinth and architrave. Let him observe the functions of each part relative to the complete structure, how each is laid upon or is dovetailed into the other to form the harmonious whole. Let him consider, in synthesis as in analysis, the words as bricks, of utility as well as beauty. Let him come, eventually, by the easiest of stages and by long and fruitful study, to the building of a humble edifice of his own. So, by his works, shall we know him.

## WRITING

It is in writing that we must express and complete our appreciation of English. We saw, in the last chapter, that feeling led to thought, thought to creation. What began in an emotional experience finished by being an originaive one. But the rush into print is one of the most undignified spectacles to which man can well be witness. Truly it is said that "Many are called but few are chosen." For how much of what is written falls short of the ideal! Writing, it may be repeated, is the artistic fusion of matter and manner. But ere these twain can become one each must fulfil its ideal.

The ideal of good matter is this: *that we must have something to say, and that something must be worth saying*. No other standard will do. And the ideal of good manner may be expressed by saying *that what we have to say must be well said*—expressed in a manner befitting the matter.

For the purpose of these notes, these two ideals will be dealt with in separate sections: Ideas, and Expression.



# THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

## (a) IDEAS.

It follows, then, that the would-be writer must have ideas, and that these ideas must be valuable and noteworthy. That is, inherent in their being must be the germ of that permanence which is found in all great literature. And the test is twofold : ideas must be original, and they must have depth. The expression of ideas that merely echoes what has been said (and in a much better way) over and over again, that repeats the irretrievably hackneyed, that rings the changes with a debased and obsolescent currency, is worse than useless. And if one's ideas are merely the scum of the surface of life—the froth and the flotsam and jetsam—they had better be left unsaid. The shallow and the superficial (often, alas ! posing as the deep) are irritating beyond belief.

Now depth and originality can only be brought about by certain means. These are :

READING,  
OBSERVATION,  
and  
EXPERIENCE,

and these are the essential nurture of

MEDITATION  
and  
IMAGINATION.

## WRITING

Reading, Observation and Experience are the foodstuffs of profound soliloquy, which in its turn is the one and only begetter of imagination.

The reader, then, having read and dwelt on the written page till its purport, aided by its emotional appeal, has been accepted into his mental storehouse as part of its equipment for the future, will find "thoughts unbidden" arising as a result. He will find himself thinking on the truth or otherwise of the thought or picture conveyed; thinking, too, of the felicity or otherwise of the image in which it was presented; and all the time sub-consciously applying the tests which have here been outlined. He will find thoughts of his own, in images of his own, stimulated thereby through their long-dormant travail to birth. The wheels of his imagination will have begun to turn round, slowly and haltingly perhaps, as when oil is first applied to a long-idle machine, but with increasing swiftness and certainty as time goes on.

The process of learning to appreciate English will then have been gone through: reading, dwelling on the written phrases, the

. . . jewels five words long  
That on the stretch'd forefinger of all time  
Sparkle for ever,



## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

till their meanings take a local habitation and a name, valuable alike for their beauty and their truth. The reader will have been sensibly shocked, which is the first step forward ; he will have been moved to thought, which is the next ; and, last step of all, he will have been led to original creation in a style all his own.

### *Experience.*

But the reader, however anxious he may be, is not yet equipped to take up the pen. There are two necessities in pencraft which he is still without : Experience and Observation. These are essential. Without them, the written page is but the prose of a pedant. The reader must have experienced, not only the incidentals of life, but life itself. And here let us flog a dying mare : for neither foreign travel nor hairbreadth adventures are essential to experience. Experience is what we cream off life and keep till it is mellowed. It is the choice, cobwebbed liqueur

that hath been  
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country green,  
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth !

## WRITING

We may get experience at the firesides in our homes ; at the back-doors of our cottages ; at the corners of our streets ; in the parks of our cities ; or in the patchwork meadows of our quilted countryside. What seems to be demanded is that the cast of the mind must be malleable—not so rigid and case-hardened as to be incapable of receiving the impressions that experience would stamp upon it. For it is these impressions of experience that, as by some divine afflatus, move us to write—force us, willy-nilly, to record, when thought has followed feeling, our experiences in print.

Walter Pater had this to say of experience, and said it so well as to make it amply worth while studying :

Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face ; some tone on the hills, or the sea, is choicer than the rest ; some mood of passion or insight, or intellectual excitement, is irresistibly real and attractive for us—for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them,

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

by the finest senses ? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces write in their purest energy ? To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits : for, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world, and meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations, seem alike. While all melts under our feet, we may well catch at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening.

### *Observation.*

So, too, with observation. Not with the unseeing eyes of the million who look, but do not observe,

## WRITING

who casually notice that a house is a house, a field a field, a primrose a flower ; but who remain totally unaware of the subtle differences and the inner spiritual significances of the things that have confronted them ; not with the myopia of these, but with the keen insight of the huntsman and the woodsman, of the falcon over its eyrie, must a man observe the pattern of the magic carpet. His whole life may change after an observant journey ; the whole complexion of it alter. Meanings may be understood, significances grasped, co-ordination revealed, and the way of God with Man made plain. That is the value of observation—observation through a perceptive eye that crowds the brain with a myriad new thoughts and ideas, fit phantasma for the furnishing of the ever-widening intellect. The observer will read “sermons in stones, books in the running brooks” ; will see “the rainbow palette of the butterfly’s wings” ; will hear the nightingale’s song :

the same that oft-times hath  
Charm’d magic casements opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn,  
and from his Parnassian pinnacle of ecstasy will

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

visualise those things which are invisible, will hearken to the harp that never was—

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter,

and will wish, with Keats, in the intolerable bliss of the moment,

To cease upon the midnight with no pain.

So much for observation. All the elements of what one has read, seen and experienced will become fused and melted in the crucible of the mind and alchemised into the pure gold of vivid and original expression.

### (b) EXPRESSION.

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to  
heaven,

And, as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.

Your head, we will take it, is throbbing with ideas. But ideas, like pieces of furniture, are in themselves so much lumber, unless susceptible to



## WRITING

selection and arrangement. You must sift your ideas—separate the wheat from the chaff. When you have put on one side, as it were, all those that are of value, you must proceed to select those that are most suitable for your immediate purpose, for in practice you will find that not all your thoughts, be they as deep and original as could well be wished, are equally suitable for the occasion at hand.

It will now be necessary for you to arrange the ideas you have chosen to expound. If they are just emptied out of your head like articles out of a box and allowed to stray “higgledy-piggledy” over your page, making confusion worse confounded, they will lack all power of logical persuasion. You must marshal your ideas in a sequence. Having perfected each pearl in your chain, you must place each one in its proper order. Each succeeding thought should appear to follow naturally from the preceding one, dovetailing into it and developing it, taking up easily the burden of the reasoning and carrying it along to its logical conclusion.

By these means you will achieve that perspicuity in your writing “by which,” said Quintilian, “care is taken, not that the reader *may* understand, if he will, but that he *must* understand, whether he

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will or not." And as an example of the exquisite result of the nice selection and arrangement of ideas and words, here is an extract from Goldsmith, precise enough to have satisfied Quintilian :

The place of our retreat was in a little neighbourhood, consisting of farmers, who tilled their own ground, and were equal strangers to opulence and poverty. As they had almost all the conveniences of life within themselves, they seldom visited towns or cities in search of superfluities. Remote from the polite, they still retained the primeval simplicity of manners : and, frugal by habit, they scarcely knew that temperance was a virtue. They wrought with cheerfulness on days of labour, but observed festivals as intervals of idleness and pleasure. They kept up the Christmas carol, sent true love-knots on Valentine morning, ate pancakes on Shrovetide, showed their wit on the 1st of April, and religiously cracked nuts on Michaelmas Eve. Being apprised of our approach, the whole neighbourhood came out to meet their minister, dressed in their finest clothes, and preceded by pipe and tabor : a feast also was provided for our reception, at which we

sate cheerfully down ; and what the conversation wanted in wit was made up in laughter.

Our little habitation was situated at the foot of a sloping hill, sheltered with a beautiful underwood behind, and a prattling river before ; on one side a meadow, on the other a green. My farm consisted of about twenty acres of excellent land, having given a hundred pounds for my predecessor's goodwill. Nothing could exceed the neatness of my little enclosure, the elms and hedgerows appearing with inexpressible beauty.

That, of course, is probably beyond the beginner ; it is near to the acme of felicity. But the beginner will be able to appreciate the contrast of the following, and to study for himself wherein the difference lies :

“ Upon my word, my dear, I don't know,” returned Mrs. Nickleby, “ really, I don't know. I am sure there was a case in the day before yesterday's paper, extracted from one of the French newspapers, about a journeyman shoemaker who was jealous of a young girl in an adjoining village because she wouldn't shut



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herself up in an air-tight three pair of stairs and charcoal herself to death with him, and who went and hid himself in a wood with a sharp-pointed knife, and rushed out as she was passing by with a few friends, and killed himself first, and then all the friends, and then her—no, killed all the friends first, and then herself, and then *himself*—which it is quite frightful to think of. Somehow or other,” added Mrs. Nickleby, after a momentary pause, “they always *are* journeyman shoemakers who do these things in France, according to the papers. I don’t know how it is—something in the leather, I suppose.”

As Gissing declared, this is the “wonderful luxuriance of amiable fatuity.” The contrast with the preceding extract is the contrast of order and chaos, and is a horrible example of what an untidy mind is capable of.

The process of sifting and selecting and arranging over, you have to consider the means of expression. You will have to clothe your thoughts in the flesh—adorn them with the habiliments that do them justice. If the burden of your song be sad, a doleful intonation must be its bier; if merry, a galop

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is its rightful accompaniment. If, on the other hand, it partakes of the subtler shades—wistfulness, say—then that wistfulness must be conveyed in your language ; or if the essential background be a curtain of weirdness, then an atmospheric “Grand Guignolism” must be conjured up. And all of these scenes, and infinitely more, may be patterned in words, for words are living things, capable, that is, of almost anything. But whatever you choose to express or suggest, whatever effect you have a mind to bring about, there are four fundamental laws which must govern your expression. These are the laws of

CHOICE,  
ORDER,  
EUPHONY,  
and  
BEAUTY.

### *Choice and Order.*

The first two laws need not detain us. Order, for one, is a grammatical device, and will be found discussed at length in all text-books on grammar, together with that other device known as the inversion of normal order. It is sufficient to say

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that words should normally be in the order of ideas, and should so obey the grammar of English as to render your meaning clear and unmistakable, free from ambiguity and confusion.

With regard to the other, the choice of words. In choosing the words to express your ideas you must choose pure and proper words, words that are correct diction, and which, by sound or sense or both, exactly suggest the ideas you would express. Your choice must be for the "best" words—that is, for the words that make clear the exact shade of your meaning, and that convey the desired tone or atmosphere.

There are two considerations, however, which must direct you in your choice of language: Simplicity and Brevity, with which I shall deal at some length.

(1) *Simplicity*.—Simplicity does not connote a spate of simpleton's talk, but a smooth-flowing river of pure, plain, and easily understandable English. Matthew Arnold quotes Joubert on the merits of simplicity as follows:—

It is by means of familiar words that style takes hold of the reader and gets possession

of him. It is by means of these that great thoughts get currency and pass for true metal, like gold and silver which have a recognised stamp put upon them. They beget confidence in the man who, in order to make his thoughts more clearly perceived, uses them ; for people feel that such an employment of the language of common life betokens a man who knows that life and its concerns, and who keeps himself in contact with them. Besides, these words make a style frank and easy. They show that an author has long made the thought or the feeling expressed his mental food ; that he has so assimilated them and familiarised them, that the most common expressions suffice him in order to express ideas which have become everyday ideas to him by the length of time they have been in his mind. And lastly, what one says in such words looks more true ; for of all the words in use, none are so clear as those which we call common words, and clearness is so eminently one of the characteristics of truth, that often it even passes for truth itself.

It may be said at once that where there is affectation, where a writer is not inspired to tell

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the truth as he sees it or to express himself as he feels, there will be none of the health of simplicity in his works. Simplicity implies sincerity, which should be the keynote of all that is written. High-falutin' words to express facts for which there are other and simpler words more fitted, periphrases, hackneyed allusions and quotations, mock heroics and "padding," and, in general, any words that are not the exact, the inevitable words, are anathema maranatha. That is not to say that the shortest word is always the best. There is no question of discussing the merits as between the shortest and the longest words. The test is simply one of suitability and inevitability, to be decided by the thing named and its context. A spade must always be a spade, but a sunset may be as the spectator sees it. The absurdity of unnecessarily high-falutin' fanfares may be illustrated by a letter from Mr. Wilkins Micawber :

MY DEAR SIR,

Circumstances beyond my individual control have, for a considerable lapse of time, effected a severance of that intimacy which, in the limited opportunities conceded to me in the

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midst of my professional duties, of contemplating the scenes and events of the past, tinged by the prismatic hues of memory, has ever afforded me, as it ever must continue to afford, gratifying emotions of no common description. This fact, my dear Sir, combined with the distinguished elevation to which your talents have raised you, deters me from presuming to aspire to the liberty of addressing the companion of my youth by the familiar appellation of Copperfield ! . . .

To take  
for  
granted  
I confine myself to throwing out the observation, that, at the hour and place I have indicated, may be found such ruined vestiges as yet

Remain  
Of

A

Fallen Tower,

WILKINS MICAWBER.

Anything further removed from the intimate art of letter-writing could not well be conceived.

There are other pomposities to avoid. There are the pomposities of *The Times* "Leader," of



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“officialese,” and of “journalese.” This sort of thing is to be avoided :

DEAR SIR,

*Re* yours of the 16th inst. We beg to announce that we have forwarded same per goods, and expect you will receive such in the course of a few days. Hoping for a continuance of your esteemed favour,

We are, etc.

and this :

A great accession of new population and new voters in a great industrial constituency like the Rand would give the concentrated increment necessary for additional seats in the House. The aggregate growth of the population in the country as compared with the towns might be larger, but the towns make a highly exaggerated and artificial claim for more representation.

Nor life, nor colour, nor movement is in that. It is merely an aggregation of consonantal polysyllables. While this example of execrable jargon is too bad to be burnt :

Simpson's artistry was a priceless asset to his side, and it was a deplorable tragedy for

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this popular idol, when in a praiseworthy attempt to stave off an attack by the nippy forwards of Buncombe, he turned the ball through his own goal.

It may be said, then, that in simple prose there is a power, a nobility, an inevitability, and, often, a dramatic under-current, that arrest the reader and secure his attention in a manner that no pompous and artificial diction can ever hope to emulate. Could the advent of Spring be more effectively described than in the simple words of Solomon—

9/11/13  
J.N.B.  
My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the Winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

—or the principles of charity be enunciated more clearly than in this excerpt from Corinthians?—

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become



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as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge ; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind ; charity envieth not ; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth ; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ; whether there be tongues, they shall cease ; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child : but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly ;

but then face to face : now I know in part ; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three ; but the greatest of these is charity.

That has the simplicity, the vigour, the power, the beauty and the mystery of literature at its best. It springs from that "well of English undefiled" —perhaps our richest inheritance—the Authorised Version of the Bible.

Now this, from Henry James, is also simple, for it is suited to its subject and understandable by all :

It was in September, in a tiny Sussex town which I had not quitted since the outbreak of the war, and where the advent of our first handful of fugitives before the warning of Louvain and Aerschoot and Termonde and Dinant had just been announced. Our small hill-top city, covering the steep sides of the compact pedestal crowned by its great church, had reserved a refuge at its highest point ; and we had waited all day, from occasional train to train, for the moment at which we should attest our hospitality. It came at last, but late in the evening, when a vague outside rumour called me to my doorstep, where the un-

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forgettable impression at once assaulted me. Up the precipitous little street that led from the station over the old grass-grown cobbles where vehicles rarely pass, came the panting procession of the homeless and their comforting, their almost clinging retainers, who seemed to hurry them on as in a sort of over-flow expression of the fever of charity. It was swift and eager, in the autumn darkness and under the flare of a single lamp—with no vociferation and, but for a woman's voice, scarce a sound save the shuffling of mounting feet and the thick-drawn breath of emotion. The note I except, however, was that of a young mother carrying her small child and surrounded by those who bore her on and on, almost lifting her as they went together. The resonance through our immemorial street of her sobbing and sobbing cry was the voice itself of history. It brought home to me more things than I could then quite take the measure of, and these just because it expressed for her not direct anguish, but the incredibility, as who should say, of honest assured protection. Months have elapsed, and from having been then one of a few hundred, she is now one of scores and scores of thousands: yet her cry

is still in my ears, whether to speak most of what she had lately or of what she actually felt, and it plays, to my own sense, as a great fitful tragic light over the dark exposure of her people.

That, of the refugees at Rye, has a finality that will brook no questioning, a finality that is all the more because of its inherent simplicity of utterance. And it may be added, in conclusion, that most things lend themselves to simple treatment.

(2) *Brevity*.—Brevity, it is claimed, is the soul of wit ; it is also very much of the soul of all expression. It consists, on its negative side, of avoidance of tautology and redundancy, or superfluous words ; of verbosity, or a weakening multiplicity of words ; of prolixity, or the endless enumeration of unnecessary facts and details. But on its positive side it consists of much more. It consists of so concentrating the meaning within the fewest possible number of words as to add a mighty power to the narrative, for, obviously, each word will then be heavily charged, big with significance, a world of meaning within its confines. This is partly to be achieved, of course, by the use of epithets and figures of speech, whose study we are about to make ;

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but also by seeking for the word or phrase that expresses most meaning, in preference to a number of words that express no more ; and by a severe elimination of everything that is not absolutely necessary and does not help forward the narrative.

The economical use of language is very effective. Often a writer will pen pages and pages of garrulous, effeminate words in a vain chase after the right word, or because the right word has eluded him, or because he has not attempted to find it. The result is a diffuseness and a hollowness that weary the reader. As an example both of sheer brevity and of utter simplicity I know nothing to beat some of the stanzas of Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" :

And now there came both mist and snow,  
And it grew wondrous cold :  
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,  
As green as emerald.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,  
'Twas sad as sad could be ;  
And we did speak only to break  
The silence of the sea !

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All in a hot and copper sky  
The bloody Sun, at noon,  
Right up above the mast did stand,  
No bigger than the moon.

Day after day, day after day,  
We stuck, nor breath nor motion,  
As idle as a painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water everywhere,  
And all the boards did shrink :  
Water, water everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot : O Christ !  
That ever this should be :  
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs  
Upon the slimy sea.

. . . . .

And every tongue, through utter drought,  
Was withered at the root ;  
We could not speak, no more than if  
We had been choked with soot.

. . . . .



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With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,  
We could not laugh nor wail,  
Through utter drought all dumb we stood.  
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,  
And cried, A sail ! A sail !

What an expressiveness is in some of these lines :  
“ And we did speak only to break The silence of  
the sea ” ; “ As idle as a painted ship Upon a painted  
ocean ” ; “ And all the boards did shrink ” ; “ And  
every tongue, through utter drought, Was withered  
at the root.”

In Shakespeare, too, will be found innumerable  
examples, clipped, concentrated, and strong. Truly,  
brevity is the essence of power, and, says De Quincey :  
“ The literature of power builds nests in aerial  
altitudes, in temples saved from violation, or in  
forests inaccessible to fraud.”

### *Euphony.*

Euphony is the agreeable sound of words in a  
sequence, and demands that all crude or harsh  
words or phrases should be avoided. It is that  
quality of style which pleases the ear by its  
harmonious sound. It is partly to be obtained, of  
course, by obedience to the two laws which have

already been discussed: Choice and Order, but mainly by what the good ear of the writer chooses as mellifluous. A pleasingly musical (though not a sing-song) diction must be used in all writing, although naturally this must be more pronounced in poetry than in prose. It is the field of poetry that offers most examples for the earnest student. One specimen from Shelley is here quoted. It should be read softly to yourself:

On a poet's lips I slept  
 Dreaming like a love adept  
 In the sound his breathing kept ;  
 Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,  
 But feeds on the Aereal kisses  
 Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.  
 He will watch from dawn to gloom  
 The lake-reflected sun illumine  
 The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,  
 Nor heed nor see what things they be ;  
 But from these create he can  
 Forms more real than living man,  
 Nurslings of immortality.

That, though full to repletion of other things, is perhaps a perfect example of euphony. But the same effect, if more subdued, is to be found in all



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good prose. Jeremy Taylor described "The Rose" thus :

But so have I seen a rose new springing from the cleft of its hood, and at first it was fair as the morning, and full with the dew of heaven, as a lamb's fleece ; but when a ruder breath had forced open its virgin modesty, and dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements, it began to put on darkness and decline to softness and the symptoms of a sickly age ; it bowed the head and broke its stalk, and at night, having lost some of its leaves and all its beauty, it fell into the portion of weeds and outworn faces.

Though euphony is not at all easy to explain, and though definite precepts cannot be formulated, these two examples, one of poetry and the other of prose, should assist you to grasp its principles. Perhaps as a final word, I may be allowed to quote Dr. Bridges on the subject :

Pure euphony (he says), the agreeable sound of a sequence of syllables, is as difficult a subject as rhythm ; and it is like rhythm in this, that the ultimate judge is the expert ear, which

depends on a natural gift : and again, as in rhythm, there are certain conditions which almost all men would agree to call pleasant, and others which they would deem unpleasant : but there is no universal principle that can be adduced to check the vagaries of taste or false fancy, since what theories have been proposed are themselves examples of false fancy : either, for instance, that the vowels correspond respectively to the primary colours, and should be grouped as those colours should be : or that euphony is exactly a musical melody made by the inherent pitch of the vowels, the sequences of which must be determined exactly as if we were composing a musical air of those inherent notes. The great indefinable complication is that this euphony, especially in poetry, is fused with the meaning : and this fusion of sound and sense is the magic of the greatest poetry. But even where the poet's success is most conspicuous and convincing, we are often quite unable to determine on what it actually depends : it is known only by its effects. . . .

Euphony must also include the purely musical effects of a metre, when this is in delicate agreement with the mood of the poem : it so enhances

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the emotional effect of a harmonious sequence of words as to overrule common proprieties of order, and the melody will require that the sonorous words shall respect its intention and fall into the positions that it prescribes.

### *Beauty.*

Our remaining canon is that of Beauty. Writing must be virile and beautiful, vivid and graphic in its delineation of scenes, motives, conflicts and characters, and these qualities are to be arrived at in two ways, by the use of the epithet and by the employment of a figure of speech. Let us take the epithet first.

(1) *The Epithet.*—The epithet is the adjective that is as near as can be the product of inspiration. Seldom will it be come at by a mechanical process. Oftenest it will flow from the writer's pen ere he is aware of what has happened, but when it is down it will remain so, for it will appear to him as both final and inevitable—the last word to be said. In like manner will it strike the reader, who will note mentally his approbation.

And bade betwixt their shores to be  
The unplumbed, salt estranging sea.

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Consider the epithets of the last line. They evade criticism ; they just are, and there 's an end on 't.

But the majestic River floated on  
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,  
Rejoicing, through the hushed Chorasmian waste  
Under the solitary moon.

“ hushed Chorasmian waste ” !—

The hunched camels of the night  
Trouble the bright  
And silver waters of the moon.

“ The hunched camels of the night ” !—

The old blind house is folded deep in snow,  
Its empty burned-out eyes accuse the stars ;  
The fissure of old wounds, struck long ago,  
Divide its crumbling face in tigered bars.

“ Burned-out eyes,” “ tigered bars ”—these epithets are the quintessence of two factors—spontaneity and inevitability. The successful epithet is born, not made ; it must come of its own accord, with the flow of inspiration, spontaneous, inevitable. That is the epithet.

It will be noted from the above examples that the

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purpose of the epithet is usually pictorial. Hence its constant use in description. And a word on description may not be out of place here, for description is, as a rule, the bane of all but the practised writer.

Description is, or should be, an ideal compound of observation and imagination. The impact of observation on the emotions sets the imagination working, giving rise to a series of glowing images, which, when the shock is over, are recollected and writ down in tranquillity. In writing them down, you must look upon yourself as a painter in words—a verbal colourist. As the artist uses his brush and palette, so must you wield your pen upon the blank canvas of your page, conjuring up in the mind of your reader the picture that you saw. And the pictorial excellence of your description will be judged by this: that the reader must see for himself, in his mind's eye, without conscious effort, the picture you describe. Your words must convey the atmosphere, hang up the back-cloth, paint the scene, with all the colour, the vividness, the imaginative power and the cumulative effect of a Botticelli, a Rubens, or a Hogarth.

Perhaps the following, a description of Venice,



from Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, will give the reader an idea and set before him an ideal :

A city of marble did I say ? nay, rather, a golden city, paved with emerald. For truly, every pinnacle and turret glanced or glowed, overlaid with gold, or bossed with jasper. Beneath, the unsullied sea drew, in deep breathing, to and fro, its eddies of green wave. . . . It lay along the face of the waters, no larger, as its captains saw it from their masts at evening, than bar of sunset that could not pass away. . . . A world from which all ignoble care and petty thought were vanished, with all the common and poor elements of life. No foulness, nor tumult, in these tremulous streets, that filled, or fell, beneath the moon. . . . And around them, far as the eye could reach, still the soft moving of stainless waters proudly pure ; as not the flower, so neither the thorn nor the thistle could grow in the glancing fields. Ethereal strength of Alps, dreamlike, vanishing in high procession beyond the Torcellan shore ; blue islands of Paduan hills, poised in the golden west.

I do not know that I can do better than quote an example or two of the descriptive or pictorial

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epithet in description ; although, of course, most of what I have already quoted (especially " The Ancient Mariner ") and most of what I shall quote in the next section are descriptive. Shakespeare is one inevitable resort ; and the poets are another. But the following has the added merit of a strange and uncommon originality. It is from Charles Doughty's *Arabia Deserta* :

The summer's night at end, the sun stands up as a crown of hostile flames from that huge covert of inhospitable sandstone bergs ; the desert day dawns not little and little, but it is noontide in an hour. The sun, entering as a tyrant upon the waste landscape, darts upon us a torment of fiery beams, not to be remitted until the far-off evening. No matins here of birds ; not a rock partridge-cock, calling with blithesome chuckle over the extreme waterless desolation. Grave is that giddy heat upon the crown of the head ; the ears tingle with a flickering shrillness, a subtle crepitation, it seems, in the glassiness of this sun-stricken nature : the hot sand-blink is in the eyes, and there is little refreshment to find in the tent's shelter ; the worsted booths leak to this fiery rain of sunny light. Mountains, looming like

dry bones through the thin air, stand far around about us : the savage flank of Ybba Moghair, the high spine and ruinous stacks of el-Jebal, Chebad, the coast of Helwan. Herds of the weak nomad camels waver dispersedly, seeking pasture in the midst of this hollow fainting country, where but lately the swarming locusts have fretted every green thing. This silent air burning about us, we endure breathless till the *assr* :<sup>1</sup> when the dazing Arabs in the tents revive after their heavy hours. The lingering day draws down to the sun-setting ; the herdsmen, weary of the sun, come again with the cattle to taste in their menzils the first sweetness of mirth and repose. The day is done, and there rises the nightly freshness of this purest mountain air : and then to the cheerful song and the cup at the common fire. The moon rises ruddy from that solemn obscurity of jebel like a mighty beacon : and the morrow will be as this day, days deadly drowned in the sun of the summer wilderness.

In poetry, of course, we find description so pointedly beautiful as to etch deep on our mind a

<sup>1</sup> *Assr* = evening.



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clear-cut cameo that burns in. Of this nature is Wordsworth's sonnet "Upon Westminster Bridge":

Earth hath not anything to show more fair :  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty :  
This city now doth, like a garment, wear  
The beauty of the morning ; silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
Open unto the field, and to the sky,  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.  
Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendour, valley, rock or hill ;  
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep.  
The river glideth at his own sweet will :  
Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep ;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still !

That the epithet, however, is not only descriptive but onomatopœic and atmospheric, is evidenced by this quatrain from Gray's "Elegy"—a quatrain whose echo, after the lines are read and done with, lingers on to haunt the stillness :

Now fades the *glimmering* landscape on the sight  
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,  
Save where the beetle wheels his *droning* flight,  
And *drowsy* tinklings lull the distant folds.

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(2) *The Figure of Speech*.—A figure of speech is a deviation from the plain meaning and the literal truth of words for the purpose of projecting a greater meaning and a larger truth. This it accomplishes by the new vistas it opens, by the profundities it probes, by the darknesses it illuminates. Objects are seen in the new light with which rhetorical figures flood them, and swift discernment and sure understanding follow. When Thompson says of the poppy—

Like a yawn of fire from the grass it came,  
And the fanning wind puffed it to flapping flame,

he deviates from the literal truth, but he strikes a comparison that illuminates his subject as nothing else could, and causes us to see and to grasp its significance as we would not have done otherwise.

Unfortunately, a hoary tradition sees in the figure of speech an ornament, and nothing more. This is so far from being the case, that it is the warp and woof of the fabric itself. Probably you are familiar with an example of architecture where the ornament seems to have been added as an after-thought, in a vain attempt to dignify or beautify the building. You may also have seen another example where the

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ornament is woven in the building itself—in its dignity, its simplicity, its fineness, in the lines of its classical severity and beauty—with no added and superfluous flourishes at all. This latter is the true function of the figure. It is something—a comparison, a contrast, or what not—by which we explain and reveal and illuminate our meaning as we could not do otherwise; something that is the lifeblood of good writing, without which the expression would be sterile and emasculate, a wilderness of words without a single oasis.

Consider the following :

Those ichthyosauri of battle, the tanks, waddle slowly over No Man's Land in the grey mist of the morning, now dipping their noses to the ground, now raising them in the air, as if seeking for the scent of the enemy.

Do we not see those tanks? Are they not brought home to us by the figure—"waddling" over No Man's Land, "dipping their noses to the ground," "raising them in the air," "seeking the scent of the enemy"—is not the picture vivid, the comparison revealing and pictorial? Then that is an illustration of the utility and necessity of figures of speech.

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Figures of speech are not to be considered as the dry bones that we study in the schoolroom. One only needs to listen to another in the grip of acute circumstances, happy or adverse, to realise that the broadest stream in the speech of everyday life is figurative. You may recall someone who gave his opinion of another whom he actually disliked, and who had but lately provoked his hostility. For the time being, in describing his enemy, he was under the stress of emotion, honestly indignant, momentarily inspired. Were not his words figurative, powerful and picturesque, however crude? That is human nature—to talk rhetorically when it is moved. And it is thus you must talk in print when the spirit urges you, and words are flowing from your pen. There must be no sitting and weeding out when you are writing the figures which the mind is prone to conjure up when you are thinking. The speech of the people—the speech that will live—is figurative; so, it will be found, are the words of those writers whose books have defied time and the dust. Shakespeare must have lived in a figurative atmosphere; he must have imbibed rhetoric with his milk; for there is scarcely a line in all his forty odd volumes which does not contain (and live and



## WRITING

LADY M.                      O, never  
Shall sun that morrow see !  
Your face, my thane, is as a book where men  
May read strange matters. To beguile the time,  
Look like the time ; bear welcome in your eye,  
Your hand, your tongue : look like the innocent  
flower,  
But be the serpent under 't.

. . . . .

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time ;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle !  
Life 's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more : it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

. . . . .

Now is the winter of our discontent  
Made glorious summer by this sun of York ;  
And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house  
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.

. . . . .



## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,  
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,  
This other Eden, demi-paradise ;  
This fortress built by nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war ;  
This happy breed of men, this little world,  
This precious stone set in the silver sea,  
Which serves it in the office of a wall,  
Or as a moat defensive to a house,  
Against the envy of less happier lands ;  
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this  
England,  
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings . . .

These are poetic examples, but all prose is full of them.

When a man's heart warms to his viands, he forgets a great deal of sophistry, and soars into a rosy zone of contemplation. Death may be knocking at the door. . . . We have something else in hand, thank God, and let him knock. Passing bells are ringing all the world over. All the world over, and every hour, some one is parting company with all his aches and ecstasies. For us also the trap is laid. But we are so fond of life we have no leisure to entertain the terror of death. It is a honeymoon •



to us all through and none of the longest.  
Small blame to us if we give our whole hearts  
to this glowing bride of burs.

Stevenson said that, but he could not have said it so well without those quick, live metaphors.

It will be seen, then, that figures of speech, based upon resemblance, contrast, or the impression of contiguity, are the spontaneous and natural ebullience of the human mind when inspired or moved. And these figures of speech, by their beauty, their daring, their virility, and their emphasis, arrest the reader and secure the reward of his interest and delight.

Figures of speech, however, must be constrained within the limits we set ourselves in the case of words: Simplicity and Brevity. To these we may add: Aptness. "When Oscar Wilde," says Mr. Tomkinson,<sup>1</sup> "wishing to avoid the triteness of a well-worn comparison, adds to it a metaphor,

The Kingfisher flies like an arrow, and wounds  
the air,

we feel that the simile helps a great deal in projecting the picture. But when a stream is spoken of as shining in a flowery meadow 'like a gold chain on an embroidered waistcoat,' the comparison is such

<sup>1</sup> In his book *The Teaching of English* (O.U.P.).

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

as only a profiteer could take a delight in : true, it is pictorial in a false and flashy manner, but the comparison is what the eighteenth-century critic was accustomed to call 'low.' And when a metaphysical poet, speaking of the ravages of small-pox, compares the pustules to drops of dew, we are offended at having such a fantastical and odious a comparison thrust upon our notice. The simile must not offend against our good taste. One of the most beautiful of colours is the delicate pink inside a porker's ear, but it would be unwise in the young poet to swear that the bloom on his lady's cheek rivalled that on a young sow's ear."

So much for aptness. Then metaphors and similes and other figures should be simple. Far-fetched or over-elaborated figures defeat their object, as do those that are commonplace and those that are not original, but the examples of past poets that have been subjected to excessive reiteration. Consider the fresh simplicity of the figures and epithets in these quatrains from "The Sensitive Plant":

A Sensitive Plant in a garden grew,  
And the young winds fed it with silver dew,  
And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light,  
And closed them beneath the kisses of Night . . .

## WRITING

But none ever trembled and panted with bliss  
In the garden, the field, or the wilderness,  
Like a doe in the Noontide with love's sweet want  
As the companionless Sensitive Plant . . .

Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulips tall,  
And narcissi, the fairest of them all,  
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess  
Till they die of their own dear loveliness . . .

And the rose like a nymph to the bath addressed  
Which unveiled the depth of her flowing breast,  
Till fold after fold, to the fainting air,  
The soul of her beauty and love lay bare ;

And the wand-like lily, which lifted up,  
As a Mænad, its moonlight-coloured cup,  
Till the fiery star which is its eye  
Gazed through clear dew on the tender sky . . .

Figures are better to be brief, for to the startlingness of their originality is then added the power of an epigrammatic brevity. Here is a metaphor on the subject of trees :

The trees are Indian Princes  
But soon they 'll turn to ghosts,

which gains immensely from being short and sweet.

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

Shelley, in his "Ode to the Skylark," has a series of exquisite similes, "profuse strains," in his own words, "of unpremeditated art." But his ode is also memorable for its limpid elegance, its eager, impassioned beauty, its examples of what simplicity and euphony and soaring loveliness can be in the hands of an "unacknowledged legislator" of the world :

The pale purple even  
    Melts around thy flight ;  
Like a star of heaven  
    In the broad daylight  
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight.

Keen as are the arrows  
    Of that silver sphere,  
Whose intense lamp narrows  
    In the white dawn clear  
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air  
    With thy joy is loud,  
As, when night is bare,  
    From one lonely cloud  
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is  
    overflow'd.

## WRITING

What thou art we know not,  
What is most like thee ?  
From rainbow clouds there flow not  
Drops so bright to see  
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a poet hidden  
In the light of thought,  
Singing hymns unbidden,  
Till the world is wrought  
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not.

Like a high-born maiden  
In a palace tower,  
Soothing her love-laden  
Soul in secret hour  
With music sweet as love, which overflows her  
bower.

There are many different figures of speech—Metaphor, Simile, Antithesis, Repetition, Personification, Metonymy, et cetera—all of which have their uses at the right moments, but I shall not enumerate them here, for they are explained at length in any good grammar-book, such as Nesfield's *Manual of Grammar and Composition*. It is enough to say, by way of conclusion, that figures will usually

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

come of their own accord, and if they do so they will not, as a rule, err on the grounds of bad taste, over-elaboration, unreality, ornateness, or floridity. The original and successful figure is something live and lovely, strong, powerful, and beautiful, a spontaneous spring from the founts of imagination, a rare and precious jewel that we would not be without.

## THE ART OF THE ESSAY

### A NOTE

ART, as Dr. Bridges has said, is the expression of ideas in some sensuous medium or material. Hence, as literature is the expression of ideas in the medium of words, the writing of English is an art. But, alas ! it is only the formal side of art that can be formulated. The preceding pages are an attempt at an approach to the other side ; they can be nothing more. They coast the fringe, perhaps, and if they penetrate here and there a little way inland, that is something to be grateful for. So the title of this note is really a misnomer, for all that can be done is merely to suggest, to outline, to put forward tentative propositions with regard to the essay.

I do not think I shall be seriously challenged if I say that ninety-five per cent. of what students and literary aspirants term their essays no more resemble essays than they do epics. In the category of written matter they may be all sorts of things—disquisitions, arguments, narratives, tales (in practice,



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however, the appellation "concoction" would cover the majority),—but neither in the letter nor in the spirit are they of the *genus* essay. The student seems to say to himself, in effect: "Oh, bother! an essay. Very well, here goes: I. Introduction; II. Principal Statement; III. Conclusion." No doubt every writer worthy of the name has a skeleton or frame-work of what he is going to say at the back of his mind, but it never assumes these outlines. He does not go to work on such a cut-and-dried method as this. He does not set about his task with a hammer and saw and a foot-rule, to produce a wooden image according to calculation; his material is plastic, to be moulded freehand, and the result has all the sensuousness and grace of something not made, but born—divinely, as an immaculate conception.

Hear Alexander Smith, himself a fluent and charming essayist, on the art of the essay:

The essay as a literary form resembles the lyric, in so far as it is moulded by some central mood—whimsical, serious, or satirical. Give the mood, and the essay, from the first sentence to the last, grows around it as the cocoon grows around the silkworm.

## THE ART OF THE ESSAY

A quick ear and eye, an ability to discern the infinite suggestiveness of common things, a brooding, meditative spirit, are all that the essayist requires to start business with. . . . It is not the essayist's duty to inform, to build pathways through metaphysical morasses, to cancel abuses, any more than it is the duty of the poet to do these things. Incidentally he may do something in that way, just as the poet may, but it is not his duty, and should not be expected of him. The essayist is a kind of poet in prose, and if questioned harshly as to his use, he might be unable to render a better apology for his existence than a flower might. The essay should be pure literature as the poem is pure literature. The essayist wears a lance, but he cares more for the sharpness of its point than for the pennon that flutters on it. . . . He plays with death as Hamlet plays with Yorick's skull, and he reads the morals—strangely stern, often, for such fragrant lodging—which are folded up in the bosoms of roses. . . . The essayist who feeds his thoughts upon the segment of the world which surrounds him cannot avoid being an egotist ; but then his egotism is not unpleasing. . . . The speaking

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about one's self is not necessarily offensive. A modest, truthful man speaks better about himself than about anything else, and on that subject his speech is likely to be most profitable to his hearers. Certainly there is no subject with which he is better acquainted, and on which he has a better title to be heard. And it is this egotism, this perpetual reference to self, in which the charm of the essayist resides. If a man is worth knowing at all, he is worth knowing well. . . . Of the essayist, when his mood is communicative, you obtain a full picture, you are made his contemporary and familiar friend. You enter into his humours and his seriousness. You are made heirs of his whims, prejudices, and playfulness.

The essay is the most personal form of writing in English. The many-sided writer, familiar with and intensely interested in life and manners, in habits and customs, leans back at ease in his chair and "blows bubbles." The essay is a bubble—light, fantastic, iridescent—evoked from philosophy's palate and floating on the wings of fancy. It is like the glittering cobweb which, after refreshing rain, we see spread-eagled on a wayside bush. A moment

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ago it was not, now it is there before us—complete, perfect, bearing no trace of tools or of the laborious processes of its being—a thing of beauty formed from “airy nothing.”

The essay may deal with the grave or the gay, the sad or the humorous, anything or everything—<sup>9</sup> subject matters not at all—but it must deal with whatever it chooses personally, vividly, imaginatively. It must be neither dogmatic nor didactic; it must not preach nor thump, nor shout nor wave its arms wildly; with regard to the problems of the day it must not be too concerned or enthusiastic. Yet that is not to say that it should be aloof—*au dessus de la mêlée*. It should not be above, but in the midst of, mankind, gathering its impressions at first hand, threading its way in and out of the mazes and labyrinths that men and women have made for their own eternal mystification. Mr. A. C. Benson, on the art of the essayist, has a paragraph of much value.<sup>1</sup> An essay, he says,

is a thing which someone does himself; and the point of the essay is not the subject, for any subject will suffice, but the charm of

<sup>1</sup> In *Modern English Essays*, 5 vols. (Dent & Sons Ltd.)

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

personality. It must concern itself with something smelt, heard, seen, perceived, invented, thought ; but the essential thing is that the writer shall have formed his own impression, and that it shall have taken shape in his own mind ; and the charm of the essay depends upon the charm of the mind that has conceived and recorded the impression. It will be seen, then, that the essay need not concern itself with anything definite ; it need not have an intellectual or a religious or a humorous motif ; but equally none of these subjects are ruled out. The only thing necessary is that the thing or the thought should be vividly apprehended, enjoyed, felt to be beautiful, and expressed with a certain gusto. It need conform to no particular rules. All literature answers to something in life, some habitual form of human expression. The stage imitates life, calling in the services of the eye and the ear ; there is the narrative of the teller of tales or the minstrel ; the song, the letter, the talk—all forms of human expression and communication have their antitypes in literature. The essay is the reverie, the frame of mind in which a man says, in the words of the old song, “ says I to myself, says I.”



## THE ART OF THE ESSAY

That, I admit, is a counsel of perfection. But I would not be a party to putting forward counsels of mediocrity. Not that I pretend that the ideal will often, if ever, be the real. But that we must raise aloft the banner of the ideal, as a spur and whip to endeavour ; we must lift up our eyes to the level of the unattainable, to the dawn that breaks and spills on the remote, inaccessible peaks, however much our footsteps may fail to follow suit.

It will not, I think, be counselling the mediocre if I venture to suggest that the novice erect this simple finger-post to guide him :

Only write when you have something to say that is worth saying ; and do not write even then unless you feel within you what Mr. Massingham calls the "procreant urge" to write—that queer welling up of emotional power, that flood of inspiration that will not be dammed.

If you are a student, of course, or even if you are a teacher, you will have occasion to write many times without feeling such a call. What then ? you ask. That is quite as it should be ; I would not have it otherwise. There is no more useful employment than continual practice in written expression. It

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

will help you in the formation and fashioning of sentences, a very necessary part of prose composition. It will lead you to eliminate the unnecessary word, to put to rights the loose verbiage and the awkward construction ; it will assist you to prune your prose effectively till it is direct in structure and simple in essence. It will give you the gift of expression—the habit of facile and fluent wording.

By such means will you arrive at technical perfection. But do not let technical perfection—the mere acquisition of the craftsman's ease and elegance—be your ambition, the inscription on your pennant, the goal and end of your literary journey. For you will soon be there, and after—what then ? *Quo vadis ?*

No. Bear in mind all the time you are thus profitably occupied that craftsman's polish is not creative genius, that matter is infinitely more important than manner, that the rough and flawed diamond is more precious than the faultless piece of glass. Inspiration, meditation, and imagination are the source of the finely-thought ; industry and application the fount of the finely-wrought. Both are enviable ; but is there any doubt as to which is the more valuable ? Fashion changes with the



## THE ART OF THE ESSAY

changing years, but that which fashion clothes is the same to-day as it was yesterday, and as it will be for evermore.

. . . . .

The following pages put forth examples, some not so well known as they might be, not only of essays, but of several different forms of writing, chosen to point the moral and illustrate the theme of the preceding pages, which may assist the reader and the would-be writer, the enthusiastic teacher and the earnest student, in their appreciation of the English language. In their diversity of subject and style the excerpts have these in common: the obvious fruits of reading, observation, and experience; the less obvious results of the workings of a fine imagination—creativity, or the power to give one to think, to examine for truth and beauty; and a general (and, to all literature, *essential*) distinction of thought and utterance, the impalpable, indefinable, but unmistakable touch of the lover and the master.

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PART II

Leaves from Literature

BEING

*Prose Passages for Study*

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I have to thank Mr. H. J. Massingham and Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd. for their kind permission to reproduce here Mr. Massingham's wonderful essay on "The Venice of England." I feel myself exceptionally fortunate in having received such a favour. Thanks are also due to Messrs. Duckworth & Co. for kindly giving permission to include a passage ("The Sun and the Brook") from "The Hills and the Vale" by Richard Jefferies. If any other copyrights have been infringed, they have been so quite unintentionally and for these infringements (if any) I beg to be excused.

In these selections I have not thought it necessary to include any from the book of Poetry, as it is understood that every student will be equipped either with Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* or the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, or, in happy circumstances, with both.

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## OF TRAVEL

FRANCIS BACON

TRAVEL, in the younger sort, is a part of education ; in the elder, a part of experience. He that travelleth into a country, before he hath some entrance into the language, goeth to school and not to travel. That young men travel under some tutor or grave servant, I allow well ; so that he be such a one that hath the language, and hath been in the country before ; whereby he may be able to tell them what things are worthy to be seen in the country where they go, what acquaintances they are to seek, what exercises or discipline the place yieldeth ; for else young men shall go hooded, and look abroad little. It is a strange thing, that in sea voyages, where there is nothing to be seen but sky and sea, men should make diaries ; but in land travel, wherein so much is to be observed, for the most part they omit it ; as if chance were fitter to be registered than observation : let diaries, therefore, be brought in use. The things to be seen and observed are, the courts of princes, especially when they give audience to ambassadors ; the courts of justice, while they sit and hear causes : and so of consistories ecclesiastic ; the churches and monasteries, with the monuments which are therein extant ; the walls and fortifications of cities and towns ; and



## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

so the havens and harbours, antiquities and ruins, libraries, colleges, disputations, and lectures, where any are ; shipping and navies ; houses and gardens of state and pleasure, near great cities ; armories, arsenals, magazines, exchanges, burses, warehouses, exercises of horsemanship, fencing, training of soldiers, and the like : comedies, such whereunto the better sort of persons do resort ; treasuries of jewels and robes ; cabinets and rarities ; and, to conclude, whatsoever is memorable in the places they go ; after all which the tutors or servants ought to make diligent inquiry. As for triumphs, masks, feasts, weddings, funerals, capital executions, and such shows, men need not to be put in mind of them : yet are they not to be neglected. If you will have a young man to put his travel into a little room, and in short time to gather much, this you must do : first, as was said, he must have some entrance into the language before he goeth ; then he must have such a servant, or tutor, as knoweth the country, as was likewise said : let him carry with him also some card, or book, describing the country where he travelleth, which will be a good key to his inquiry ; let him also keep a diary ; let him not stay long in one city or town, more or less as the place deserveth, but not long ; nay, when he stayeth in one city or town, let him change his lodging from one end and part of the town to another, which is a great adamant of acquaintance ; let him sequester himself from the company of his countrymen, and diet in such places where there is good

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company of the nation where he travelleth : let him, upon his removes from one place to another, procure recommendation to some person of quality residing in the place whither he removeth, that he may use his favour in those things he desireth to see or know ; thus he may abridge his travel with much profit. As for the acquaintance which is to be sought in travel, that which is most of all profitable, is acquaintance with the secretaries and employed men of ambassadors ; for so in travelling in one country he shall suck the experience of many : let him also see and visit eminent persons in all kinds, which are of great name abroad, that he may be able to tell how the life agreeth with the fame ; for quarrels, they are with care and discretion to be avoided ; they are commonly for mistresses, healths, place, and words ; and let a man beware how he keepeth company with cholerick and quarrelsome persons ; for they will engage him into their own quarrels. When a traveller returneth home, let him not leave the countries where he hath travelled altogether behind him, but maintain a correspondence by letters with those of his acquaintance which are of most worth : and let his travel appear rather in his discourse than in his apparel or gesture ; and in his discourse let him be rather advised in his answers, than forward to tell stories : and let it appear that he doth not change his country manners for those of foreign parts ; but only prick in some flowers of that he hath learned abroad, into the customs of his own country.

## GOOD THINGS

### THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON, II

OUR life is short and tedious, and in the death of a man there is no remedy ; neither was there any man known to have returned from the grave. For we are born at all adventure, and we shall be hereafter as though we had never been ; for the breath in our nostrils is as smoke, and a little spark in the moving of our heart, which being extinguished, our body shall be turned into ashes, and our spirit shall vanish as the soft air, and our name shall be forgotten in time, and no man shall have our works in remembrance, and our life shall pass away as the trace of a cloud, and shall be dispersed as a mist that is driven away with the beams of the sun, and overcome with the heat thereof. For our time is a very shadow that passeth away, and after our end there is no returning ; for it is fast sealed, so that no man cometh again. Come on therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures like as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments ; and let no flower of the spring pass by us ; let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they be withered ; let none of us go without his part of our voluptuousness, let us leave tokens of our joyfulness in every place, for this is our portion, and our lot is this.

## DUST

JOHN DONNE

It comes equally to us all, and makes us equal when it comes. The ashes of an oak are no epitaph of that oak, to tell me how high or how large that was ; it tells me not what flocks it sheltered while it stood, nor what men it hurt when it fell. The dust of great persons' graves is speechless too ; it says nothing, it distinguishes nothing. As soon the dust of a wretch whom thou wouldest not, as of a Prince whom thou couldest not look upon, will trouble thine eyes, if the wind blow it thither ; and when a whirlwind hath blown the dust of the churchyard into the Church, and the man sweeps out the dust of the Church into the churchyard, who will undertake to sift those dusts again, and to pronounce this is the patrician, this the noble flour, and this the yeomanly, this the plebeian bran.

## ENJOYMENT

JEREMY TAYLOR

I CONSIDER that he that is the greatest possessor in the world, enjoys its best and most noble parts, and those which are of most excellent perfection, but in common with the inferior persons, and the most despicable of his kingdom. Can the greatest prince enclose the Sun, and set one little Star in his cabinet for his own use, or secure to himself the gentle and benign influence of any one constellation? Are not his subjects' fields bedewed with the same showers that water his gardens of pleasure? . . .

The poorest artisan of Rome, walking in Cæsar's gardens, had the same pleasures which they ministered to their Lord: and although it may be he was put to gather fruits to eat from another place, yet his other senses were delighted equally with Cæsar's: the birds made him as good music, the flowers gave him as sweet smells; he there sucked as good air, and delighted in the beauty and order of the place, for the same reason and upon the same perception as the prince himself, save only that Cæsar paid for all that pleasure vast sums of money, the blood and treasure of a province, which the poor man had for nothing.



## ENJOYMENT

Suppose a man lord of ~~all~~ the whole world (for still we are but in supposition) yet since everything is received, not according to its own greatness and worth, but according to the capacity of the receiver, it signifies very little as to our content, or to the riches of our possession. . . . He to whom the world can be given to any purpose greater than a private estate can minister, must have new capacities created in him : he needs the understanding of an angel to take the accounts of his estate ; he had need have a stomach like fire or the grave for else he can eat no more than one of his healthful subjects ; and unless he hath an eye like the Sun, and a motion like that of a thought, and a bulk as big as one of the orbs of heaven, the pleasures of his eye can be no greater than to behold the beauty of a little prospect from a hill, or to look upon the heap of gold packed up in a little room, or to dote upon a cabinet of jewels—better than which there is no man that sees at all but sees every day. For not to name the beauties and sparkling diamonds of heaven, a man's or a woman's or a hawk's eye is more beauteous and excellent than all the jewels of his crown.

# THE IDEAL HUSBAND

DOROTHY OSBORNE

TO

SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE

(No date; c. 1653.)

THERE are a great many ingredients must go to the making me happy in a husband. My cousin F. says our humours must agree, and to do that he must have that kind of breeding that I have had, and used to that kind of company ; that is, he must not be so much a country gentleman as to understand nothing but hawkes and dogs, and be fonder of either than his wife ; nor of the next sort of them, whose time reaches no farther than to be justice of peace, and once in his life high sheriff, who reads no book but statutes, and studies nothing but how to make a speech interlarded with Latin, that may amaze his disagreeing poor neighbours, and fight them rather than persuade them into quietness. He must not be a thing that began the world in a free school, was sent from thence to the university, and is at his farthest when he reaches the inns of court ; has no acquaintance but those of his form in those places ; speaks the French he has picked out



## THE IDEAL HUSBAND

of old laws, and admires nothing but the stories he has heard of the revels that were kept there before his time. He must not be a town gallant neither, that lives in a tavern and an ordinary ; that cannot imagine how an hour should be spent without company, unless it be in sleeping ; that makes court to all the women he sees, thinks they believe him, and laughs and is laughed at equally. Nor a travelled Monsieur, whose head is feathered inside and outside, that can talk of nothing but of dance and duels, and has courage enough to wear slashes, when everybody else dies with cold to see him. He must not be a fool of no sort, nor peevish, nor ill-natured, nor proud, nor courteous ; and to all this must be added, that he must love me, and I him, as much as we are capable of loving. Without all this, his fortune, though never so great, would not satisfy me, and with it a very moderate one would keep me from ever repenting my disposal. . . .

## A MEDITATION UPON A BROOMSTICK

JONATHAN SWIFT

THIS single stick, which you now behold ingloriously lying in that neglected corner, I once knew in a flourishing state in a forest ; it was full of sap, full of leaves, and full of boughs ; but now in vain does the busy art of man pretend to vie with nature, by tying that withered bundle of twigs to its sapless trunk ; it is now at best but the reverse of what it was, a tree turned upside down, the branches on the earth, and the root in the air ; it is now handled by every dirty wench, condemned to do her drudgery, and, by a capricious kind of fate, destined to make her things clean, and be nasty itself ; at length, worn out to the stump in the service of the maids, it is either thrown out of doors, or condemned to the last use of kindling a fire. When I beheld this, I sighed, and said within myself : Surely mortal man is a broomstick ? Nature sent him into the world strong and lusty, in a thriving condition, wearing his own hair on his head, the proper branches of this reasoning vegetable, until the axe of intemperance has lopped off his green boughs, and left him a withered trunk ; he then flies to art, and puts on a periwig, valuing himself upon an unnatural bundle of hairs, all covered with powder, that never

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grew on his head ; but now should this our broomstick pretend to enter the scene, proud of those birchen spoils it never bore, and all covered with dust, though the sweepings of the finest lady's chamber, we should be apt to ridicule, and despise its vanity. Partial judges that we are of our own excellences, and other men's defaults.

But a broomstick, perhaps you will say, is an emblem of a tree standing on its head : and pray, what is man but a topsy-turvy creature, his animal faculties perpetually mounted on his rational, his head where his heels should be—grovelling on the earth ! And yet, with all his faults, he sets up to be a universal reformer and corrector of abuses, a remover of grievances ; rakes into every slut's corner of nature, bringing hidden corruptions to the light, and raises a mighty dust where there was none before, sharing deeply all the while in the very same pollution he pretends to sweep away. His last days are spent in slavery to women, and generally the least deserving ; till, worn to the stump, like his brother-besom, he is either kicked out of doors, or made use of to kindle flames for others to warm themselves by.

## THE GRAND VIZIER'S LADY

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU

ADRIANOPLE,

18 April, O.S. (1717).

I WROTE to you, dear sister, and to all my other English correspondents, by the last ship, and only Heaven can tell when I shall have another opportunity of sending to you ; but I cannot forbear writing, though perhaps my letter may lie upon my hands this two months. To confess the truth, my head is so full of my entertainment yesterday, that 'tis absolutely necessary for my own repose to give it some vent. Without further preface, I will then begin my story. I was invited to dine with the Grand Vizier's lady, and it was with a great deal of pleasure I prepared myself for an entertainment which was never given before to any Christian. I thought I should very little satisfy her curiosity (which I did not doubt was a considerable motive to the invitation) by going in a dress she was used to see, and therefore dressed myself in the Court habit of Vienna, which is much more magnificent than ours. However, I chose to go *incognita*, to avoid any disputes about ceremony, and went in a Turkish coach, only attended by my woman that held up my train, and the Greek lady who was my interpretress. I was met at the court door by her black eunuch,

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who helped me out of the coach with great respect, and conducted me through several rooms, where her she-slaves, finely dressed, were ranged on each side. In the innermost I found the lady sitting on her sofa, in a sable vest. She advanced to meet me, and presented me half a dozen of her friends with great civility. She seemed a very good woman, near fifty years old. I was surprised to observe so little magnificence in her house, the furniture being all very moderate ; and except the habits and number of her slaves, nothing about her that appeared expensive. She guessed at my thoughts, and told me that she was no longer of an age to spend either her time or money in superfluities, that her whole expense was in charity, and her whole employment praying to God. There was no affectation in this speech ; both she and her husband are entirely given up to devotion. He never looks upon any other woman ; and, what is much more extraordinary, touches no bribes, notwithstanding the example of all his predecessors. He is so scrupulous on this point, he would not accept Mr. Wortley's present, till he had been assured over and over that it was a settled perquisite of his place at the entrance of every ambassador.

She entertained me with all kinds of civility till dinner came in, which was served, one dish at a time, to a vast number, all finely dressed after their manner, which I do not think so bad as you have perhaps heard it represented. I am a very good judge of their eating, having lived three weeks in



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the house of an effendi at Belgrade, who gave us very magnificent dinners, dressed by his own cooks, which the first week pleased me extremely ; but I own I then began to grow weary of it, and desired our own cook might add a dish or two after our manner. But I attribute this to custom. I am very much inclined to believe an Indian, that had never tasted of either, would prefer their cookery to ours. Their sauces are very high, all the roast very much done. They use a great deal of rich spice. The soup is served for the last dish ; and they have at least as great variety of ragouts as we have. I was very sorry I could not eat as many as the good lady would have had me, who was very earnest in serving me of everything. The treat concluded with coffee and perfumes, which is a high mark of respect ; two slaves, kneeling, censed my hair, clothes and handkerchief. After this ceremony, she commanded her slaves to play and dance, which they did with their guitars in their hands ; and she excused to me their want of skill, saying she took no care to accomplish them in that art.

I returned her thanks, and soon after took my leave. I was conducted back in the same manner I entered ; and would have gone straight to my own house ; but the Greek with me earnestly solicited me to visit the *Kiyaya's* lady, saying he was the second officer in the empire, and ought indeed to be looked upon as the first, the Grand Vizier having only the name, while he exercised the authority. I had found so little diversion in this harem, that

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I had no mind to go into another. But her importunity prevailed with me, and I am extreme glad that I was so complaisant.

All things here were with quite another air than at the Grand Vizier's ; and the very house confessed the difference between an old devotee and a young beauty. It was nicely clean and magnificent. I was met at the door by two black eunuchs, who led me through a long gallery between two ranks of beautiful young girls, with their hair finely plaited, almost hanging to their feet, all dressed in fine light damasks, brocaded with silver. I was sorry that decency did not permit me to consider them nearer. But that thought was lost upon my entrance into a large room, or rather pavilion, built round with gilded sashes, which were most of them thrown up, and the trees planted near them gave an agreeable shade, which hindered the sun from being troublesome. The jessamines and honey-suckles that twisted round their trunks, shedding a soft perfume, increased by a white marble fountain playing sweet water in the lower part of the room, which fell into three or four basins with a pleasing sound. The roof was painted with all sorts of flowers, falling out of gilded baskets, that seemed tumbling down. On a sofa, raised three steps, and covered with fine Persian carpets, sat the *Kiyaya's* lady, leaning on cushions of white satin embroidered ; and at her feet sat two young girls, the eldest about twelve years old, lovely as angels, dressed perfectly rich, and almost covered with jewels. But they were



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hardly seen near the fair Fatima (for that is her name), so much her beauty effaced everything I have seen, all that has been called lovely either in England or Germany, and must own that I never saw anything so gloriously beautiful, nor can I recollect a face that would have been taken notice of near hers. She stood up to receive me, saluting me after their fashion, putting her hand upon her heart with a sweetness full of majesty, that no court breeding could ever give. She ordered cushions to be given to me, and took care to place me in the corner, which is the place of honour. I confess, though the Greek lady had before given me a great opinion of her beauty, I was so struck with admiration, that I could not for some time speak to her, being wholly taken up in gazing. That surprising harmony of features! that charming result of the whole! that exact proportion of the body! that lovely bloom of complexion unsullied by art! the unutterable enchantment of her smile! But her eyes!—large and black, with all the languishment of the blue!—every turn of her face discovering some new charm.

After my first surprise was over, I endeavoured, by nicely examining her face, to find out some imperfection, without any fruit of my search, but being clearly convinced of the error of that vulgar notion, that a face perfectly regular would not be agreeable: nature having done for her with more success, what Appelles is said to have essayed, by a collection of the most exact features, to form

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a perfect face, and to that, a behaviour, so full of grace and sweetness, such easy motions, with an air so majestic, yet free from all stiffness or affectation, that I am persuaded, could she be suddenly transported upon the most polite throne of Europe, nobody would think her other than born and bred a queen, though educated in a country we call barbarous. To say all in a word, our most celebrated English beauties would vanish near her.

She was dressed in a *caftan* of gold brocade, flowered with silver, very well fitted to her shape, and shewing to advantage the beauty of her bosom, only shaded by the thin gauze of her shift. Her drawers were pale pink, green and silver ; her slippers white, finely embroidered ; her lovely arms adorned with bracelets of diamonds, and her broad girdle set around with diamonds ; upon her head a rich Turkish handkerchief of pink and silver, her own fine black hair hanging a great length in various tresses, and on one side of her head some bodkins of jewels. I am afraid you will accuse me of extravagance in this description. I think I have read somewhere that women always speak in rapture when they speak of beauty, but I cannot imagine why they should not be allowed to do so. I rather think it virtue to be able to admire without any mixture of desire or envy. The gravest writers have spoken with great warmth of some celebrated pictures and statues. The workmanship of Heaven certainly excels all our weak imitations, and, I think, has a much better claim to our praise. For

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me, I am not ashamed to own I took more pleasure in looking on the beauteous Fatima, than the finest piece of sculpture could have given me.

She told me the two girls at her feet were her daughters, though she appeared too young to be their mother. Her fair maids were ranged below the sofa, to the number of twenty, and put me in mind of the pictures of the ancient nymphs. I did not think all Nature could have furnished such a scene of beauty. She made them a sign to play and dance. Four of them immediately began to play some soft airs on instruments between a lute and a guitar which they accompanied with their voices, while the others danced by turns. This dance was very different from what I had seen before. Nothing could be more artful. . . . The tunes so soft ! the motions so languishing ! accompanied with pauses and dying eyes ! half-falling back, and then recovering themselves in so artful a manner. . . . I suppose you may have read that the Turks have no music but what is shocking to the ears ; but this account is from those who have never heard any, but what is played in the streets, and is just as reasonable as if a foreigner should take his ideas of the English music from the bladder and string, and marrow-bone and cleavers. I can assure you that the music is extremely pathetic ; 'tis true I am inclined to prefer the Italian, but perhaps I am partial. I am acquainted with a Greek lady who sings better than Mrs. Robinson, and is very well skilled in both, who gives the preference to the

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Turkish. 'Tis certain they have very fine natural voices ; these were very agreeable. When the dance was over, four fair slaves came into the room with silver censers in their hands, and perfumed the room with amber, aloes-wood, and other scents. After this, they served me coffee upon their knees in the finest Japan china, with *soucoupes* of silver gilt. The lovely Fatima entertained me all this while in the most polite agreeable manner, calling me often *Guzel saltanum*, or the beautiful sultana, and desiring my friendship with the best grace in the world, lamenting that she could not entertain me in my own language.

When I took my leave, two maids brought in a fine silver basket of embroidered handkerchiefs ; she begged I would wear the richest for her sake, and gave the others to my woman and interpretress. I returned through the same ceremonies as before, and could not help fancying I had been some time in Mahomet's paradise, so much was I charmed with what I had seen. I know not how the relation of it appears to you. I wish it may give you part of my pleasure ; for I would have my dear sister share in all the diversions of, etc.





## SHAKESPEARE

SAMUEL JOHNSON

THAT praises are without reason lavished on the dead, and that the honours due only to excellence are paid to Antiquity, is a complaint like to be always continued by those who, being able to add nothing to truth, hope for eminence from the heresies of paradox; or those who, being forced by disappointment upon consolatory expedients, are willing to hope from posterity what the present age refuses, and flatter themselves that the regard which is yet denied by envy will be at last bestowed by time.

Antiquity, like every other quality that attracts the notice of mankind, has undoubtedly votaries that reverence it, not from reason, but from prejudice. Some seem to admire indiscriminately whatever has been long preserved, without considering that time has sometimes co-operated with chance; all perhaps are more willing to honour past than present excellence; and the mind contemplates genius through the shades of age, as the eye surveys the sun through artificial opacity. The great contention of criticism is to find the faults of the moderns and the beauties of the ancients. While an author is yet living we estimate his powers by his worst performance, and when he is dead we rate them by his best.

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To works, however, of which the excellence is not absolute and definite, but gradual and comparative, to works not raised upon principles demonstrative and scientific, but appealing wholly to observation and experience, no other test can be applied than length of duration and continuance of esteem. What mankind have long possessed they have often examined and compared ; and if they persist to value the possession, it is because frequent comparisons have confirmed opinion in its favour. As among the works of nature, no man can properly call a river deep or a mountain high, without the knowledge of many mountains and many rivers, so, in the productions of genius, nothing can be styled excellent till it has been compared with other works of the same kind. Demonstration immediately displays its power, and has nothing to hope or fear from the flux of years ; but works tentative and experimental must be estimated by their proportion to the general and collective ability of man, as it is discovered in a long succession of endeavours. Of the first building that was raised, it might be with certainty determined that it was round or square ; but whether it was spacious or lofty must have been referred to time. The Pythagorean scale of numbers was at once discovered to be perfect ; but the poems of Homer we yet know not to transcend the common limits of human intelligence, but by remarking that nation after nation, and century after century, has been able to do little more than transpose his incidents, new-name his characters, and paraphrase his sentiments.



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The reverence due to writings that have long subsisted arises, therefore, not from any credulous confidence in the superior wisdom of past ages, or gloomy persuasion of the degeneracy of mankind, but is the consequence of acknowledged and indubitable positions, that what has been longest known has been most considered, and what is most considered is best understood.

The poet of whose works I have undertaken the revision may now begin to assume the dignity of an ancient, and claim the privilege of established fame and prescriptive veneration. He has long outlived his century, the term commonly fixed as the test of literary merit. Whatever advantages he might once derive from personal allusions, local customs, or temporary opinions, have for many years been lost ; and every topic of merriment or motive of sorrow which the modes of artificial life afforded him, now only obscure the scenes which they once illuminated. The effects of favour and competition are at an end ; the tradition of his friendships and his enmities has perished ; his works support no opinion with arguments, nor supply any faction with invectives ; they can neither indulge vanity nor gratify malignity ; but are read without any other reason than the desire of pleasure, and are therefore praised only as pleasure is obtained ; yet, thus unassisted by interest or passion, they have passed through variations of taste and changes of manners, and, as they devolved from one generation to another, have received new honours at every transmission.

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But because human judgment, though it be gradually gaining upon certainty, never becomes infallible—and approbation, though long continued, may yet be only the approbation of prejudice or fashion—it is proper to enquire by what peculiarities of excellence Shakespeare has gained and kept the favour of his countrymen.

Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature. Particular manners can be known to few, and therefore few only can judge how nearly they are copied. The irregular combinations of fanciful invention may delight awhile by that novelty of which the common satiety of life sends us all in quest ; but the pleasures of sudden wonder are soon exhausted, and the mind can only repose on the stability of truth.

Shakespeare is, above all writers—at least above all modern writers—the poet of Nature ; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world ; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers ; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions ; they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of

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other poets a character is too often an individual ; in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species.

It is from this wide extension of design that so much instruction is derived. It is this which fills the plays of Shakespeare with practical axioms and domestic wisdom. It is said of Euripides that every verse was a precept ; and it may be said of Shakespeare that from his works may be collected a system of civil and economical prudence. Yet his real power is not shown in the splendour of particular passages, but by the progress of his fable and the tenor of his dialogue ; and he that tries to recommend him by select quotations will succeed like the pedant in Hierocles, who, when he offered his house to sale, carried a brick in his pocket as a specimen.

It will not easily be imagined how much Shakespeare excels in accommodating his sentiments to real life, but by comparing him with other authors. It was observed of the Ancient Schools of declamation that the more diligently they were frequented the more was the student disqualified for the world, because he found nothing there which he should ever meet in any other place. The same remark may be applied to every stage but that of Shakespeare. The theatre, when it is under any other direction, is peopled by such characters as were never seen, conversing in a language which was never heard, upon topics which will never arise in the commerce of mankind. But the dialogue of this author is often so evidently determined by the

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incident which produces it, and is pursued with so much ease and simplicity, that it seems scarcely to claim the merit of fiction, but to have been gleaned by diligent selection out of common conversation and common occurrences.

Upon every other stage the universal agent is love, by whose power all good and evil is distributed, and every action quickened or retarded. To bring a lover, a lady, and a rival into the fable ; to entangle them in contradictory obligations, perplex them with oppositions of interest, and harass them with violence of desires inconsistent with each other ; to make them meet in rapture and part in agony ; to fill their mouths with hyperbolical joy and outrageous sorrow ; to distress them as nothing human ever was distressed ; to deliver them as nothing human ever was delivered, is the business of a modern dramatist. For this probability is violated, life is misrepresented, and language is depraved. But love is only one of many passions ; and as it has no great influence upon the sum of life, it has little operation in the dramas of a poet who caught his ideas from the living world, and exhibited only what he saw before him. He knew that any other passion, as it was regular or exorbitant, was a cause of happiness or calamity.

Characters thus ample and general were not easily discriminated and preserved, yet perhaps no poet ever kept his personages more distinct from each other. I will not say with Pope that every speech may be assigned to the proper speaker,



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because many speeches there are which have nothing characteristical; but perhaps, though some may be equally adapted to every person, it will be difficult to find that any can be properly transferred from the present possessor to another claimant. The choice is right when there is reason for choice.

Other dramatists can only gain attention by hyperbolical or aggravated characters, by fabulous and unexampled excellence or depravity, as the writers of barbarous romances invigorated the reader by a giant and a dwarf; and he that should form his expectation of human affairs from the play or from the tale, would be equally deceived. Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men who act and speak as the reader thinks that he could himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion: even where the agency is supernatural, the dialogue is level with life. Other writers disguise the most natural passions and most frequent incidents, so that he who contemplates them in the book will not know them in the world; Shakespeare approximates the remote and familiarizes the wonderful. The event which he represents will not happen, but, if it were possible, its effects would probably be such as he has assigned; and it may be said that he has not only shown human nature as it acts in real exigencies, but as it would be found in trials to which it cannot be exposed.

This, therefore, is the praise of Shakespeare—that his drama is the mirror of life; that he who has

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mazed his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raised up before him, may here be cured of his delirious ecstasies by reading human sentiments in human language, by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions.

"Beyond the Great Bo  
4) good friends  
meet.



*Beautiful*

## INDIFFERENCE IN MISFORTUNE

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

No observation is more common, and at the same time more true, than that one half of the world are ignorant how the other half lives. The misfortunes of the great be held up to engage our attention ; are enlarged upon in tones of declamation ; and the world is called upon to gaze at the noble sufferers ; the great, under the pressure of calamity, are conscious of several others sympathising with their distress, and have, at once, the comfort of admiration and pity.

There is nothing magnanimous in bearing misfortunes with fortitude when the whole world is looking on : men in such circumstances will act bravely even from motives of vanity ; but he, who, in the vale of obscurity, can brave adversity, who without friends to encourage, acquaintances to pity, or even without hope to alleviate his misfortunes, can behave with tranquillity and indifference, is truly great ; whether peasant or courtier, he deserves admiration, and should be held up for our imitation and respect.

While the slightest inconveniences of the great are magnified into calamities, while tragedy mouths out their sufferings in all the strains of eloquence,

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the miseries of the poor are entirely disregarded ; and yet some of the lower ranks of people undergo more real hardships in one day than those of a more exalted station suffer in their whole lives. It is inconceivable what difficulties the meanest of our common sailors and soldiers endure without murmuring or regret ; without passionately declaiming against providence, or calling their fellows to be gazers on their intrepidity. Every day is to them a day of misery. And yet they bear their hard fate without repining.

With what indignation do I hear an Ovid, a Cicero, or a Rabutin complain of their misfortunes and hardships, whose greatest calamity was that of being unable to visit a certain spot of earth, to which they had foolishly attached an idea of happiness. Their distresses were pleasures, compared to what many of the adventuring poor every day endure without murmuring. They ate, drank, and slept ; they had slaves to attend them, and were sure of subsistence for life ; while many of their fellow creatures are obliged to wander without a friend to comfort or assist them, and even without shelter from the severity of the season.

IN HOLLAND  
OLIVER GOLDSMITH  
TO  
HIS UNCLE CONTARINE

LEYDEN,  
*April-May, 1754.*

DEAR SIR,

I suppose by this time I am accused of either neglect or ingratitude, and my silence imputed to my usual slowness of writing. But believe me, Sir, when I say, that till now I had not an opportunity of sitting down with that ease of mind which writing required. You may see by the top of the letter that I am at Leyden; but of my journey hither you must be informed. Some time after the receipt of your last, I embarked for Bordeaux, on board a Scotch ship, called the *St. Andrews*, Capt. John Wall, master. The ship made a tolerable appearance, and as another inducement, I was let to know that six agreeable passengers were to be my company. Well, we were but two days at sea when a storm drove us into a city of England called Newcastle-upon-Tyne. We all went ashore to refresh us after the fatigue of our voyage. Seven men and I were one day on shore, and on the following evening,

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as we were all very merry, the room door bursts open, enters a sergeant and twelve grenadiers with their bayonets screwed, and puts us all under the King's arrest. It seems my company were Scotchmen in the French service, and had been in Scotland to enlist soldiers for the French army. I endeavoured all I could to prove my innocence ; however, I remained in prison with the rest a fortnight, and with difficulty got off even then. Dear Sir, keep this all a secret, or at least say it was for debt ; for if it were once known at the University, I should hardly get a degree. But hear how Providence interposed in my favour ; the ship was gone on to Bordeaux before I got from prison, and was wrecked at the mouth of the Garonne, and every one of the crew were drowned. It happened the last great storm. There was a ship at that time ready for Holland. I embarked, and in nine days, thank my God, I arrived safe at Rotterdam ; whence I travelled by land to Leyden ; and whence I now write.

You may expect some account of this country, and though I am not well qualified for such an undertaking, yet shall I endeavour to satisfy some part of your expectations. Nothing surprised me more than the books every day published, descriptive of the manners of this country. Any young man who takes it into his head to publish his travels, visits the countries he intends to describe ; passes through them with as much inattention as his *valet de chambre* ; and consequently not having a

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fund himself to fill a volume, he applies to those who wrote before him, and gives us the manners of a country, not as he must have seen them, but such as they might have been fifty years before. The modern Dutchman is quite a different creature from him of former times ; he in everything imitates a Frenchman, but in his easy disengaged air, which is the result of keeping polite company. The Dutchman is vastly ceremonious, and is perhaps exactly what a Frenchman might have been in the reign of Louis XIV. Such are the better-bred. But the downright Hollander is one of the oddest figures in nature. Upon a head of lank hair, he wears a half-cocked narrow hat laced with black ribbon ; no coat, but seven waistcoats, and nine pairs of breeches ; so that his hips reach almost up to his armpits. This well-clothed vegetable is now fit to see company, or make love. But what a pleasing creature is the object of his appetite ? Why, she wears a large fur cap with a deal of Flanders lace ; for every pair of breeches he carries, she puts on two petticoats.

A Dutch lady burns nothing about her phlegmatic admirer but his tobacco. You must know, Sir, every woman carries in her hand a stove with coals in it, which, when she sits, she snugs under her petticoats ; and at this chimney dozing Strephon lights his pipe. I take it that this continual smoking is what gives the man the ruddy healthful complexion he generally wears, by draining his superfluous moisture, while the woman, deprived of this amusement, overflows



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with such viscidities as tint the complexion, and give that paleness of visage which low fenny grounds and moist air conspire to cause. A Dutch woman and Scotch will well bear an opposition.

The one is pale and fat, the other lean and ruddy : the one walks as if she were straddling after a go-cart, and the other takes too masculine a stride. I shall not endeavour to deprive either country of its share of beauty ; but must say, that of all objects on this earth, an English farmer's daughter is most charming. Every woman there is a complete beauty, while the higher class of women want many of the requisites to make them even tolerable. Their pleasures here are very dull, though very various. You may smoke, you may doze ; you may go to the Italian comedy, as good an amusement as either of the former. This entertainment always brings in Harlequin, who is generally a magician, and in consequence of his diabolical art performs a thousand tricks on the rest of the persons of the drama, who are all fools. I have seen the pit in a roar of laughter at this humour, when with his sword he touches the glass from which another is drinking. 'Twas not his face they laughed at, for that was masked. They must have seen something vastly queer in the wooden sword, that neither I, nor you, Sir, were you there, could see.

In winter, when their canals are frozen, every house is forsaken, and all people are on the ice ; sleds, drawn by horses, and skating, are at that time the reigning amusements. They have boats here



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that slide on the ice, and are driven by the winds. When they spread all their sails, they go more than a mile and a half a minute, and their motion is so rapid the eye can scarcely accompany them. Their ordinary manner of travelling is very cheap and very convenient: they sail in covered boats drawn by horses; and in these you are sure to meet people of all nations. Here the Dutch slumber, the French chatter, and the English play at cards. Any man who likes company may have them to his taste. For my part I generally detached myself from all society, and was wholly taken up in observing the face of the country. Nothing can equal its beauty; wherever I turn my eye, fine houses, elegant gardens, statues, grottos, vistas, presented themselves; but when you enter their towns you are charmed beyond description. No misery is to be seen here; everyone is usefully employed.

Scotland and this country bear the highest contrast. There hills and rocks intercept every prospect; here 'tis all a continued plain. There you might see a well-dressed duchess issuing from a dirty close; and here a dirty Dutchman inhabiting a palace. The Scotch may be compared to a tulip planted in dung; but I never see a Dutchman in his own house, but I think of a magnificent Egyptian temple dedicated to an ox. Physic is by no means here taught so well as in Edinburgh; and in all Leyden there are but four British students, owing to all necessaries being so extremely dear, and the professors so very lazy (the chemical professor

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excepted), that we don't much care to come hither. I am not certain how long my stay here may be ; however, I expect to have the happiness of seeing you at Kilmore, if I can, next March.

Direct to me, if I am honoured with a letter from you, to Madame Diallyon's at Leyden.

Thou best of men, may Heaven guard and preserve you, and those you love.

A LETTER  
HORACE WALPOLE  
TO  
THE RIGHT HON. LADY HERVEY

PARIS,  
*Oct. 13, 1765.*

How are the mighty fallen ! Yes, yes, madam, I am as like the Duc de Richelieu as two peas ; but then they are two old withered grey peas. Do you remember the fable of "Cupid and Death," and what a piece of work they made with hustling their arrows together ? This is just my case : Love might shoot at me, but it was with a gouty arrow. I have had a relapse in both feet, and kept my bed six days : but the fit seems to be going off ; my heart can already go alone, and my feet promise themselves the mighty luxury of a cloth shoe in two or three days. Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, who are here, and are, alas ! to carry this, have been of great comfort to me, and have brought their delightful little daughter, who is as quick as Ariel. Mr. Ramsay could want no assistance from me : what do we both exist upon here, Madam, but your bounty and charity ? When did you ever leave one of your friends in want of another ? Madame Geoffrin

## A LETTER

came and sat two hours last night by my bedside ; I could have sworn it had been my Lady Hervey, she was so good to me. It was with so much sense, information, instruction, and correction ! The manner of the latter charms me. I never saw anybody in my days that catches one's faults and vanities and impositions so quick, that explains them to one so clearly, and convinces one so easily. I never liked to be set right before. You cannot imagine how I taste it ! I make her both my confessor and director, and begin to think I shall be a reasonable creature at last, which I had never intended to be. The next time I see her, I believe I shall say : " Oh ! Common Sense, sit down ; I have been thinking so and so ; is not it absurd ? " for t'other sense and wisdom, I never liked them ; I shall now hate them for her sake. If it was worth her while, I assure your ladyship she might govern me like a child.

The Dux de Nivernois too is astonishingly good to me. In short, Madam, I am going down hill, but the sun sets so pleasingly. . . .

I have writ to Madame de Guerchy about your orange-flower water ; and I sent your ladyship two little French pieces that I hope you received. The uncomfortable posture in which I write will excuse my saying any more ; but it is no excuse against my trying to do anything to please one, who always forgets pain when her friends are in question.

## BLAKESMOOR<sup>1</sup> IN H—SHIRE

CHARLES LAMB

I DO not know a pleasure more affecting than to range at will over the deserted apartments of some fine old family mansion. The traces of extinct grandeur admit of a better passion than envy: and contemplations on the great and good, whom we fancy in succession to have been its inhabitants, weave for us illusions, incompatible with the bustle of modern occupancy, and vanities of foolish present aristocracy. The same difference of feeling, I think, attends us between entering an empty and a crowded church. In the latter it is chance but some present human frailty—an act of inattention on the part of some of the auditory—or a trait of affectation, or worse, vain-glory, on that of the preacher—puts us by our best thoughts, disharmonising the place and the occasion. But wouldst thou know the beauty of holiness?—go alone on some week-day, borrowing the keys of good Master Sexton, traverse the cool aisles of some country church: think of the piety that has kneeled there—the congregations, old and young, that have found consolation there—the meek pastor—the docile parishioner. With no disturbing

<sup>1</sup> Blakesware in Hertfordshire.



## BLAKESMOOR IN H—SHIRE

emotions, no cross conflicting comparisons, drink in the tranquillity of the place, till thou thyself become as fixed and motionless as the marble effigies that kneel and weep around thee.

Journeying northward lately, I could not resist going some few miles out of my road to look upon the remains of an old great house with which I had been impressed in this way in infancy. I was apprised that the owner of it had lately pulled it down; still I had a vague notion that it could not all have perished, that so much solidity with magnificence could not have been crushed all at once into the mere dust and rubbish which I found it.

The work of ruin had proceeded with a swift hand indeed, and the demolition of a few weeks had reduced it to—an antiquity.

I was astonished at the indistinction of everything. Where had stood the great gates? What bounded the courtyard? Whereabout did the outhouses commence? A few bricks only lay as representatives of that which was so stately and so spacious.

Death does not shrink up his human victim at this rate. The burnt ashes of a man weigh more in their proportion.

Had I seen these brick-and-mortar knaves at their process of destruction, at the plucking of every pannel I should have felt the varlets at my heart. I should have cried out to them to spare a plank at least out of the cheerful store-room, in whose hot window-seat I used to sit and read Cowley, with



## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

the grass-plot before, and the hum and flappings of that one solitary wasp that ever haunted it about me—it is in mine ears now, as oft as summer returns ; or a panel of the yellow room.

Why, every plank and panel of that house for me had magic in it. The tapestried bedrooms—tapestry so much better than painting—not adorning merely, but peopling the wainscots—at which childhood ever and anon would steal a look, shifting its coverlid (replaced as quickly) to exercise its tender courage in a momentary eye-encounter with those stern bright visages, staring reciprocally—all Ovid on the walls, in colours vivider than his descriptions. Actæon in mid sprout, with the unappeasable prudery of Diana ; and the still more provoking and almost culinary coolness of Dan Phœbus, eel-fashion, deliberately divesting of Marsyas.

Then, that haunted room—in which old Mrs. Battle died—whereinto I have crept, but always in the day-time, with a passion of fear, and a sneaking curiosity, terror-tainted, to hold communication with the past. *How shall they build it up again ?*

It was an old deserted place, yet not so long deserted but that traces of the splendour of past inmates were everywhere apparent. Its furniture was still standing, even to the tarnished gilt leather battledores, and crumbling feathers of shuttlecocks in the nursery, which told that children had once played there. But I was a lonely child, and had the range at will of every apartment, knew every nook and corner, wandered and worshipped everywhere.

## BLAKESMOOR IN H—SHIRE

The solitude of childhood is not so much the mother of thought, as it is the feeder of love, and silence, and admiration. So strange a passion for the place possessed me in those years, that, though there lay—I shame to say how few roods distant from the mansion—half hid by trees, what I judged some romantic lake, such was the spell which bound me to the house, and such my carefulness not to pass its strict and proper precincts, that the idle waters lay unexplored for me; and not till late in life, curiosity prevailing over elder devotion, I found, to my astonishment, a pretty, brawling brook had been the *Lacus Incognitus* of my infancy. Variegated views, extensive prospects—and those at no great distance from the house—I was told of such—What were they to me, being out of the boundaries of my Eden?—So far from a wish to roam, I would have drawn, methought, still closer the fences of my chosen prison; and have been hemmed in by a yet securer cincture of those excluding garden walls. I could have exclaimed with that garden-loving poet—

Bind me, ye woodbines, in your twines;  
Curl me about, ye gadding vines;  
And, oh, so close your circles lace,  
That I may never leave this place;  
But, lest your fetters prove too weak,  
Ere I your silken bondage break,  
Do you, O brambles, chain me too,  
And, courteous briars, nail me through.

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

I was here as in a lonely temple. Snug firesides—the low-built roof—parlours ten feet by ten—frugal boards, and all the homeliness of home—these were the condition of my birth, the wholesome soil which I was planted in. Yet, without impeachment to their tenderest lessons, I am not sorry to have had glances of something beyond ; and to have taken, if but a peep in childhood, at the contrasting accidents of a great fortune.

To have the feeling of gentility, it is not necessary to have been born gentle. The pride of ancestry may be had on cheaper terms than to be obliged to an importunate race of ancestors ; and the coatless antiquary in his unemblazoned cell, revolving the long line of a Mowbray's or De Clifford's pedigree, at those sounding names may warm himself into as gay a vanity as those who do inherit them. The claims of birth are ideal merely, and what herald shall go about to strip me of an idea ? Is it trenchant to their swords ? Can it be hacked off as a spur can ? or torn away like a tarnished garter ?

What, else, were the families of the great to us ? What pleasure should we take in their tedious genealogies, or their capitulatory brass monuments ? What to us the uninterrupted current of their bloods, if our own did not answer within us to a cognate and corresponding elevation ?

Or wherefore else, O tattered and diminished 'Scutcheon that hung upon the time-worn walls of thy princely stairs, BLAKESMOOR ! have I in childhood so oft stood poring upon the mystic characters

## BLAKESMOOR IN H—SHIRE

—thy emblematic supports, with their prophetic "Resurgam"—till, every dreg of peasantry purging off, I received into myself Very Gentility? Thou wert first in my morning eyes; and of nights, hast detained my steps from bedward, till it was but a step from gazing at thee to dreaming on thee.

This is the only true gentry by adoption; the veritable change of blood, and not, as empirics have fabled, by transfusion.

Who it was by dying that had earned the splendid trophy, I know not, I inquired not; but its fading rags, and colours cobweb-stained, told that its subject was of two centuries back.

And what if my ancestor at that date was some Damoetas—feeding flocks, not his own, upon the hills of Lincoln—did I in less earnest vindicate to myself the family trappings of this once proud Aegon?—repaying by a backward triumph the insults he might possibly have heaped in his life-time upon my poor pastoral progenitor.

If it were presumption so to speculate, the present owners of the mansion had least reason to complain. They had long forsaken the old house of their fathers for a newer trifle; and I was left to appropriate to myself what images I could pick up, to raise my fancy, or to soothe my vanity.

I was the true descendant of those old W——s;<sup>1</sup> and not the present family of that name, who had fled the old waste places.

<sup>1</sup> Plumer was the name of the owner of Blakesware.



## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

Mine was that gallery of good old family portraits which as I have gone over, giving them in fancy my own family name, one—and then another—would seem to smile—reaching forward from the canvas, to recognise the new relationship; while the rest looked grave, as it seemed, at the vacancy in their dwelling, and thoughts of fled posterity.

That Beauty with the cool blue pastoral drapery, and a lamb—that hung next the great bay window—with the bright yellow H—shire hair, and eye of watchet hue—so like my Alice! I am persuaded she was a true Elia—Mildred Elia, I take it.

Mine, too, BLAKESMOOR, was thy noble Marble Hall, with its mosaic pavements and its Twelve Cæsars—stately busts in marble—ranged round: of whose countenances, young reader of faces as I was, the frowning beauty of Nero, I remember, had most of my wonder; but the mild Galba had my love. There they stood in the coldness of death, yet freshness of immortality.

Mine too, thy lofty Justice Hall, with its one chair of authority, high-backed and wickered, once the terror of luckless poacher, or self-forgetful maiden—so common since, that bats have roosted in it.

Mine too—whose else?—thy costly fruit-garden, with its sun-baked southern wall; the ampler pleasure-garden rising backwards from the house in triple terraces, with flower-pots now of palest lead, save that a speck here and there, saved from the elements, bespake their pristine state to have been gilt and glittering; the verdant quarters

## BLAKESMOOR IN H—SHIRE

backwarder still ; and, stretching still beyond, in old formality, thy firry wilderness, the haunt of the squirrel, and the day-long murmuring wood-pigeons with that antique image in the centre, God or Goddess, I wist not ; but child of Athens or old Rome paid never a sincerer worship to Pan or to Sylvanus in their native groves, than I to that fragmental mystery.

Was it for this, that I kissed my childish hands too fervently in your idol worship, walks and windings of BLAKESMOOR ! for this, or what sin of mine, has the plough passed over your pleasant places ? I sometimes think that as men, when they die, do not die all, so of their extinguished habitations there may be a hope—a germ to be revived.



## POOR RELATIONS

CHARLES LAMB

A POOR Relation—is the most irrelevant thing in nature,—a piece of impertinent correspondency,—an odious approximation,—a haunting conscience,—a preposterous shadow, lengthening in the noontide of our prosperity,—an unwelcome remembrancer,—a perpetually recurring mortification,—a drain on your purse,—a more intolerable dun upon your pride,—a drawback upon success,—a rebuke to your rising,—a stain in your blood,—a blot on your 'scutcheon,—a rent in your garment,—a death's head at your banquet,—Agathocles' pot,—a Mordecai in your gate, a Lazarus at your door,—a lion in your path,—a frog in your chamber,—a fly in your ointment,—a mote in your eye,—a triumph to your enemy,—an apology to your friends,—the one thing not needful,—the hail in harvest,—the ounce of sour in a pound of sweet.

He is known by his knock. Your heart telleth you "That is Mr. ———." A rap, between familiarity and respect; that demands, and, at the same time, seems to despair of, entertainment. He entereth smiling and—embarrassed. He holdeth out his hand to you to shake, and—draweth it back again. He casually looketh in about dinner-time—when the

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table is full. He offereth to go away, seeing you have company, but is induced to stay. He filleth a chair, and your visitor's two children are accommodated at a side table. He never cometh upon open days, when your wife says with some complacency, "My dear, perhaps Mr. — will drop in to-day." He remembereth birthdays—and professeth he is fortunate to have stumbled upon one. He declareth against fish, the turbot being small—yet suffereth himself to be importuned into a slice against his first resolution. He sticketh by the port—yet will be prevailed upon to empty the remainder glass of claret, if a stranger press it upon him. He is a puzzle to the servants, who are fearful of being too obsequious or not civil enough, to him. The guests think "they have seen him before." Everyone speculateth upon his condition: and the most part take him to be—a tide waiter. He calleth you by your Christian name, to imply that his other is the same with your own. He is too familiar by half, yet you wish he had less diffidence. With half the familiarity, he might pass for a casual dependent; with more boldness he would be in no danger of being taken for what he is. He is too humble for a friend, yet taketh on him more state than befits a client. He is a worse guest than a country tenant, inasmuch as he bringeth up no rent—yet 'tis odds, from his garb and demeanour, that your guests take him for one. He is ~~asked~~ to make one at the whist table; refuseth on the score of poverty, and—resents being left out. When the company break up he proffereth to go for a coach—

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and lets the servant go. He recollects your grandfather ; and will thrust in some mean and quite unimportant anecdote of—the family. He knew it when it was not quite so flourishing as “ he is blest in seeing it now.” He reviveth past situations to institute what he calleth—favourable comparisons. With a reflecting sort of congratulation, he will inquire the price of your furniture ; and insults you with a special commendation of your window-curtains. He is of opinion that the urn is the more elegant shape, but after all, there was something more comfortable about the old tea-kettle—which you must remember. He dare say you must find a great convenience in having a carriage of your own, and appealeth to your lady if it is not so. Inquireth if you have had your arms done on vellum yet ; and did not know, till lately, that such-and-such had been the crest of the family. His memory is unseasonable ; his compliments perverse ; his talk a trouble ; his stay pertinacious ; and when he goeth away, you dismiss his chair into a corner, as precipitately as possible, and feel fairly rid of two nuisances.

There is a worse evil under the sun, and that is—a female Poor Relation. You may do something with the other, you may pass him off tolerably well ; but your indigent she-relative is hopeless. “ He is an old humourist,” you may say, “ and affects to go threadbare. His circumstances are better than folks would take them to be. You are fond of having a Character at your table, and truly he is one.” But

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in the indications of female poverty there can be no disguise. No woman dresses below herself from caprice. The truth must out without shuffling. "She is plainly related to the L——s; or what does she at their house?" She is, in all probability, your wife's cousin. Nine times out of ten, at least, this is the case. Her garb is something between a gentlewoman and a beggar, yet the former evidently predominates. She is most provokingly humble, and ostentatiously sensible to her inferiority. He may require to be repressed sometimes—*aliquando sufflaminandus erat*—but there is no raising her. You send her soup at dinner, and she begs to be helped—after the gentlemen. Mr. —— requests the honour of taking wine with her; she hesitates between Port and Madeira, and chuses the former—because he does. She calls the servant *Sir*; and insists on not troubling him to hold her plate. The housekeeper patronises her. The children's governess takes upon her to correct her, when she has mistaken the piano for harpsichord.

Richard Amlet, Esq., in the play, is a noticeable instance of the disadvantages to which this chimerical notion of *affinity constituting a claim to an acquaintance* may subject the spirit of a gentleman. A little foolish blood is all that is betwixt him and a lady with a great estate. His stars are perpetually crossed by the malignant maternity of an old woman, who persists in calling him "her son Dick." But she has wherewithal in the end to recompense his indignities, and float him again upon the brilliant



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surface, under which it had been her seeming business and pleasure all along to sink him. All men, besides, are not of Dick's temperament. I knew an Amlèt in real life, who wanting Dick's buoyancy, sank indeed. Poor W—— was of my own standing at Christ's, a fine classic, and a youth of promise. If he had a blemish, it was too much pride; but its quality was inoffensive; it was not of that sort which hardens the heart, and serves to keep inferiors at a distance; it only sought to ward off derogation from itself. It was the principle of self-respect carried as far as it could go, without infringing upon that respect, which he would have everyone else equally maintain for himself. He would have you think alike with him on this topic. Many a quarrel have I had with him, when we were rather older boys, and our tallness made us more obnoxious to observation in the blue clothes, because I would not thread the alleys and blind ways of the town with him to elude notice, when we have been out together on a holiday in the streets of this sneering and prying metropolis. W—— went, sore with these notions, to Oxford, where the dignity and sweetness of a scholar's life, meeting with the alloy of a humble introduction, wrought in him a passionate devotion to the place, with a profound aversion to the society. The servitor's gown (worse than his school array) clung to him with Nessian venom. He thought himself ridiculous in a garb, under which Latimer must have walked erect; and in which Hooker, in his young days, possibly

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flaunted in a vein of no discommendable vanity. In the depths of college shades, or in his lonely chamber, the poor student shrunk from observation. He found shelter among books, which insult not ; and studies, that ask no questions of a youth's finances. He was lord of his library, and seldom cared for looking out beyond his domains. The healing influence of studious pursuits was upon him, to soothe and to abstract. He was almost a healthy man ; when the waywardness of his fate broke out against him with a second and worse malignity. The father of W—— had hitherto exercised the humble profession of house-painter at N——, near Oxford. A supposed interest with some of the heads of colleges had now induced him to take up his abode in that city, with the hope of being employed upon some public works which were talked of. From that moment I read in the countenance of the young man the determination which at length tore him from academical pursuits for ever. To a person unacquainted with our Universities, the distance between the gownsmen and the townsmen, as they are called—the trading part of the latter especially—is carried to an excess that would appear harsh and incredible. The temperament of W——'s father was diametrically the reverse of his own. Old W—— was a little, busy, cringing tradesman, who, with his son upon his arm, would stand bowing and scraping, cap in hand, to anything that wore the semblance of a gown—insensible to the winks and opener



## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

remonstrances of the young man, to whose chamber-fellow, or equal in standing, perhaps, he was thus obsequiously and gratuitously ducking. Such a state of things could not last. W—— must change the air of Oxford or be suffocated. He chose the former; and let the sturdy moralist, who strains the point of the filial duties as high as they can bear, censure the dereliction; he cannot estimate the struggle. I stood with W——, the last afternoon I ever saw him, under the eaves of his paternal dwelling. It was in the fine lane leading from the High Street to the back of —— College, where W—— kept his rooms. He seemed thoughtful, and more reconciled. I ventured to rally him,—finding him in a better mood—upon a representation of the Artist Evangelist, which the old man, whose affairs were beginning to flourish, had caused to be set up in a splendid sort of frame over his really handsome shop, either as a token of prosperity, or badge of gratitude to his saint. W—— looked up at the Luke, and like Satan, “knew his mounted sign—and fled.” A letter on his father’s table the next morning, announced that he had accepted a commission in a regiment about to embark for Portugal. He was among the first who perished before the walls of St. Sebastian.

I do not know, how, upon a subject which I began with treating half seriously, I should have fallen upon a recital so eminently painful; but this theme of poor relationship is replete with so much matter for tragic as well as comic associations, that it is

## POOR RELATIONS

difficult to keep the account distinct without blending. The earliest impressions which I received on this matter, are certainly not attended with anything painful, or very humiliating, in the recalling. At my father's table (no very splendid one) was to be found, every Saturday, the mysterious figure of an aged gentleman, clothed in neat black, of a sad yet comely appearance. His deportment was of the essence of gravity ; his words few or none ; and I was not to make a noise in his presence. I had little inclination to have done so—for my cue was to admire in silence. A particular elbow chair was appropriated to him, which was in no case to be violated. A peculiar sort of sweet pudding, which appeared on no other occasion, distinguished the days of his coming. I used to think him a prodigiously rich man. All I could make out of him was, that he and my father had been schoolfellows a world ago at Lincoln, and that he came from the Mint. The Mint I knew to be a place where all the money was coined—and I thought he was the owner of all that money. Awful ideas of the Tower twined themselves about his presence. He seemed above human infirmities and passions. A sort of melancholy grandeur invested him. From some inexplicable doom I fancied him obliged to go about in an eternal suit of mourning ; a captive—a stately being, let out of the Tower on Saturdays. Often have I wondered at the temerity of my father, who, in spite of an habitual general respect which we all in common manifested towards him, would venture

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

now and then to stand up against him in some argument, touching their youthful days. The houses of the ancient city of Lincoln are divided (as most of my readers know) between the dwellers on the hill and in the valley. This marked distinction formed an obvious division between the boys who lived above (however brought together in a common school) and the boys whose paternal residence was on the plain ; a sufficient cause of hostility in the code of these young Grotiuses. My father had been a leading Mountaineer ; and would still maintain the general superiority, in skill and hardihood, of the *Above Boys* (his own faction) over the *Below Boys* (so were they called), of which party his contemporary had been a chieftain. Many and hot were the skirmishes on this topic—the only one upon which the old gentleman was ever brought out—and bad blood bred ; even sometimes almost to the recommencement (so I expected) of actual hostilities. But my father, who scorned to insist upon advantages, generally contrived to turn the conversation upon some adroit by-commendation of the old Minster ; in the general preference of which, before all other cathedrals in the island, the dweller on the hill, and the plain-born, could meet on a conciliating level, and lay down their less important differences. Once only I saw the old gentleman really ruffled, and I remembered with anguish the thought that came over me : “ Perhaps he will never come here again.” He had been pressed to take another plate of the viand, which I have already mentioned as the

## POOR RELATIONS

indispensable concomitant of his visits. He had refused with a resistance amounting to rigour—when my aunt, an old Lincolnian, but who had something of this in common with my cousin Bridget, that she would sometimes press civility out of season—uttered the following memorable application—“Do take another slice, Mr. Billet, for you do not get pudding every day.” The old gentleman said nothing at the time—but he took occasion in the course of the evening, when some argument had intervened between them, to utter with an emphasis which chilled the company, and which chills me now as I write it—“Woman, you are superannuated.” John Billet did not survive long, after the digesting of this affront; but he survived long enough to assure me that peace was actually restored! and, if I remember aright, another pudding was discreetly substituted in the place of that which had occasioned the offence. He died at the Mint (anno 1781), where he had long held, what he accounted, a comfortable independence; and with five pounds, fourteen shillings, and a penny, which were found in his escritoire after his decease, left the world, blessing God that he had enough to bury him, and that he had never been obliged to any man for a sixpence. This was—a Poor Relation.



## CAPTAIN JACKSON

CHARLES LAMB

AMONG the deaths in our obituary for this month, I observe with concern, "At his cottage on the Bath Road, Captain Jackson." The name and the attribution are common enough; but a feeling like reproach persuades me, that this could have been no other in fact than my dear old friend, who some five-and-twenty years ago rented a tenement, which he was pleased to dignify with the appellation here used, about a mile from Westbourne Green. Alack, how good men, and the good turns they do us, slide out of memory, and are recalled but by the surprise of some such sad memento as that which now lies before us!

He whom I mean was a retired half-pay officer, with a wife and two grown-up daughters, whom he maintained with the port and notions of gentlewomen upon that slender professional allowance. Comely girls they were, too.

And was I in danger of forgetting this man? his cheerful suppers—the noble tone of hospitality, when first you set your foot in *the cottage*—the anxious ministerings about you, where little or nothing (God knows) was to be ministered—Althea's horn in a poor platter—the powers of self-enchantment, by which

## CAPTAIN JACKSON

in his magnificent wishes to entertain you, he multiplied his means to bounties.

You saw with your bodily eyes indeed what seemed a bare scrag—cold savings from the foregone meal—remnant hardly sufficient to send a mendicant from the door contented. But in the copious will—the revelling imagination of your host—the “mind, the mind, Master Shallow,” whole beeves were spread before you—hecatombs—no end appeared to the profusion.

It was the widow’s cruse—the loaves and fishes ; carving could not lessen nor helping diminish it—the stamina were left—the elemental bone still flourished, divested of its accidents.

“ Let us live while we can,” methinks I hear the open-handed creature exclaim ; “ while we have, let us not want ; ” “ here is plenty left ; ” “ want for nothing ”—with many more such hospitable sayings, the spurs of appetite, and old concomitants of smoking boards, and feast-oppressed charges. Then sliding a slender rind of Single Gloucester upon his wife’s plate, or the daughter’s, he would convey the remnant rind into his own, with a merry quirk of “ the nearer the bone,” etc., and declaring that he universally preferred the outside. For we had our table distinctions, you are to know, and some of us in a manner sate above the salt. None but his guest or guests dreamed of tasting flesh luxuries at night, the fragments were *vere hospitibus sacra*. But of one thing or another there was always enough and leavings : only he would sometimes



finish the remainder crust to show that he wished no savings.

Wine we had none ; nor except on very rare occasions spirits ; but the sensation of wine was there. Some thin kind of ale I remember—" British beverage " he would say. " Push about, my boys ; " " Drink to your sweethearts, girls." At every meagre draught a toast must ensue or a song. All the forms of good liquor were there with none of the effects wanting. Shut your eyes and you would swear a capacious bowl of punch was foaming in the centre with beams of generous Port or Madeira radiating to it from each of the table corners. You got flustered without knowing whence ; tipsy upon words ; and reeled under the potency of his unperforming Bacchanalian encouragements.

We had our songs—" Why, Soldiers, Why "—and the " British Grenadiers "—in which last we were all obliged to bear chorus. Both the daughters sang. Their proficiency was a nightly theme—the masters he had given them—the " no-expense " which he spared to accomplish them in a science " so necessary to young women." But then—they could not sing " without the instrument."

Sacred, and, by me, never-to-be-violated, Secrets of Poverty ! Should I disclose your honest aims at grandeur, your makeshift efforts of magnificence ? Sleep, sleep, with all thy broken keys, if one of the bunch be extant ; thrummed by a thousand ancestral thumbs ; dear, cracked, spinnet of dearer Louisa !

## CAPTAIN JACKSON

Without mention of mine, be dumb, thou thin accompanier of her thinner warble! A veil be spread over the dear delightful face of the well-deluded father, who now haply listening to cherubic notes, scarce feels sincerer pleasure than when she awakened thy time-shaken chords responsive to the twitterings of that slender image of a voice.

We were not without our literary talk either. It did not extend far, but as far as it went, it was good. It was bottomed well; had good grounds to go upon. In *the cottage* was a room, which tradition authenticated to have been the same in which Glover, in his occasional retirements, had penned the greater part of his *Leonidas*. This circumstance was nightly quoted, though none of the present inmates, that I could discover, appeared ever to have met with the poem in question. But that was no matter. Glover had written there, and the anecdote was pressed into the account of the family importance. It diffused a learned air through the apartment, the little side casement of which (the poet's study window), opening upon a superb view as far as the pretty spire of Harrow, over domains and patrimonial acres, not a rood nor square yard whereof our host could call his own, yet gave occasion to an immoderate expansion of—vanity shall I call it?—in his bosom, as he showed them in a glowing summer evening. It was all his, he took it all in, and communicated rich portions of it to his guests. It was a part of his largess, his hospitality; it was going over his grounds; he

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

was lord for the time of showing them, and you the implicit lookers-up to his magnificence.

He was a juggler, who threw mists before your eyes—you had no time to detect his fallacies. He would say, “ Hand me the *silver* sugar tongs ; ” and before you could discover that it was a single spoon, and that *plated*, he would disturb and captivate your imagination by a misnomer of “ the urn ” for a tea kettle ; or by calling a homely bench a sofa. Rich men direct you to their furniture, poor ones divert you from it ; he neither did one nor the other, but by simply assuming that everything was handsome about him, you were positively at a demur what you did, or did not see, at *the cottage*. With nothing to live on, he seemed to live on everything. He had a stock of wealth in his mind ; not that which is properly termed *Content*, for in truth he was not to be *contained* at all, but overflowed all bounds by the force of a magnificent self-delusion.

Enthusiasm is catching ; and even his wife, a sober native of North Britain, who generally saw things more as they were, was not proof against the continual collision of his credulity. Her daughters were rational, and discreet young women ; in the main, perhaps, not insensible to their true circumstances. I have seen them assume a thoughtful air at times. But such was the preponderating opulence of his fancy, that I am persuaded, not for any half hour together did they ever look their own prospects fairly in the face. There was no resisting the vortex of his temperament. His

## CAPTAIN JACKSON

riotous imagination conjured up handsome settlements before their eyes, which kept them up in the eye of the world too, and seem at last to have realised themselves; for they both have married since, I am told, more than respectably.

It is long since, and my memory waxes dim on some subjects, or I should wish to convey some notion of the manner in which the pleasant creature described the circumstances of his own wedding-day. I faintly remember something of a chaise and four, in which he made his entry into Glasgow on that morning to fetch the bride home, or carry her thither, I forget which. It so completely made out the stanza of the old ballad—

When we came down through Glasgow town,  
We were a comely sight to see;  
My love was clad in black velvet,  
And I myself in cramasie.

I suppose it was the only occasion upon which his own actual splendour at all corresponded with the world's notions on that subject. In homely cart, or travelling caravan, by whatever humble vehicle they chanced to be transported in less prosperous days, the ride through Glasgow came back upon his fancy, not as a humiliating contrast, but as a fair occasion for reverting to that one day's state. It seemed an "equipage etern" from which no power of fate, or fortune, once mounted, had power thereafter to dislodge him.

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH.

There is some merit in putting a handsome face upon indigent circumstances. To bully and swagger away the sense of them before strangers, may not be always discommendable. Tibbs and Bobadil, even when detected, have more of our admiration than contempt. But for a man to put the cheat upon himself ; to play the Bobadil at home ; and, steeped in poverty up to the lips, to fancy himself all the while chin-deep in riches, is a strain of constitutional philosophy, and a mastery over fortune, which was reserved for my old friend Captain Jackson.



## OLD CHINA

CHARLES LAMB

I HAVE an almost feminine partiality for old china. When I go to see any great house, I enquire for the china-closet, and next for the picture-gallery. I cannot defend the order of preference, but by saying that we have all some taste or other, of too ancient a date to admit of our remembering distinctly that it was an acquired one. I can call to mind the first play, and the first exhibition, that I was taken to ; but I am not conscious of a time when china jars and saucers were introduced into my imagination.

I had no repugnance then—why should I now have ?—to those little, lawless, azure-tinctured grotesques, that under the notion of men and women, float about, uncircumscribed by any element, in that world before perspective—a china tea-cup.

I like to see my old friends—whom distance cannot diminish—figuring up in the air (so they appear to our optics), yet on *terra firma* still—for so we must in courtesy interpret that speck of deeper blue, which the decorous artist, to prevent absurdity, had made to spring up beneath their sandals.

I love the men with women's faces, and the women, if possible, with still more womanish expressions. Pe  
Za



## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

Here is a young and courtly Mandarin, handing tea to a lady from a salver—two miles off. See how distance seems to set off respect ! And here the same lady, or another—for likeness is identity on tea-cups—is stepping into a little fairy boat, moored on the hither side of this calm garden river, with a dainty mincing foot, which in a right angle of incidence (as angles go in our world) must infallibly land her in the midst of a flowery mead—a furlong off on the other side of the same strange stream !

Farther on—if far or near can be predicted of their world—see horses, trees, pagodas, dancing the hays.

Here—a cow and rabbit couchant, and co-extensive—so objects show, seen through the lucid atmosphere of fine Cathay.

I was pointing out to my cousin last evening, over our Hyson (which we are old-fashioned enough to drink unmixed still of an afternoon), some of those *speciosa miracula* upon a set of extraordinary old blue china (a recent purchase) which we were now for the first time using ; and could not help remarking how favourable circumstances had been to us of late years, that we could afford to please the eye sometimes with trifles of this sort—when a passing sentiment seemed to overshadow the brows of my companion. I am quick at detecting these summer clouds in Bridget.

“ I wish the good old times would come again,” she said, “ when we were not quite so rich. I do not mean that I want to be poor ; but there was a middle

## OLD CHINA

state"—so she was pleased to ramble on—"in which I am sure we were a great deal happier. A purchase is but a purchase, now that you have money enough and to spare. Formerly it used to be a triumph. When we coveted a cheap luxury (and O! how much ado I had to get you to consent in those times!)—we were used to have a debate two or three days before, and to weigh the *for* and *against*, and think what we might spare it out of, and what saving we could hit upon, that should be an equivalent. A thing was worth buying then, when we felt the money that we paid for it.

"Do you remember the brown suit, which you made to hang upon you, till all your friends cried shame upon you, it grew so thread-bare—and all because of that folio Beaumont and Fletcher, which you dragged home late at night from Barker's in Covent Garden? Do you remember how we eyed it for weeks before we could make up our minds to the purchase, and had not come to a determination till it was near ten o'clock of the Saturday night, when you set off from Islington, fearing you should be too late—and when the old bookseller with some grumbling opened his shop, and by the twinkling taper (for he was setting bedwards) lighted out the relic from his dusty treasures—and when you lugged it home, wishing it were twice as cumbersome—and when you presented it to me—and when we were exploring the perfectness of it (*collating* you called it)—and while I was repairing some of the loose leaves with paste, which your impatience would not suffer

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to be left till daybreak—was there no pleasure in being a poor man? or can those neat black clothes which you wear now, and are so careful to keep brushed, since we have become rich and finical, give you half the honest vanity, with which you flaunted it about in that overworn suit—your old corbeau—for four or five weeks longer than you should have done, to pacify your conscience for the mighty sum of fifteen—or sixteen shillings was it?—a great affair we thought it then—which you had lavished on the old folio. Now you can afford to buy any book that pleases you, but I do not see that you ever bring me home any nice old purchase now.

“When you came home with twenty apologies for laying out a less number of shillings upon that print after Lionardo, which we christened the ‘Lady Blanch’; when you looked at the purchase, and thought of the money—and thought of the money, and looked again at the picture—was there no pleasure in being a poor man? Now, you have nothing to do but to walk into Colnaghi’s and buy a wilderness of Lionardos. Yet do you?”

“Then, do you remember our pleasant walks to Enfield, and Potter’s Bar, and Waltham, when we had a holyday—holydays, and all other fun, are gone, now we are rich—and the little hand-basket in which I used to deposit our day’s fare of savoury cold lamb and salad—and how you would pry about at noon-tide for some decent house, where we might go in, and produce our store—only paying for the ale that you must call for—and speculate upon the looks of

## OLD CHINA

the landlady, and whether she was likely to allow us a table-cloth—and wish for such another hostess, as Izaak Walton has described many a one on the pleasant banks of the Lea, when he went a fishing—and sometimes they would prove obliging enough, and sometimes they would look grudgingly upon us—but we had cheerful looks still for one another, and would eat our plain food savorily, scarcely grudging Piscator his Trout Hall? Now—when we go out a day's pleasuring, which is seldom moreover, we *ride* part of the way—and go into a fine inn, and order the best of dinners, never debating the expense—which, after all, never has half the relish of those chance country snaps, when we were at the mercy of uncertain usage and a precarious welcome.

“You are too proud to see a play anywhere now but in the pit. Do you remember where it was we used to sit, when we saw ‘The Battle of Hexham,’ and ‘The Surrender of Calais,’ and Bannister and Mrs. Bland in ‘The Children in the Wood,’—when we squeezed out our shillings a-piece to sit three or four times in a season in the one-shilling gallery—where you felt all the time that you ought not to have brought me—and more strongly I felt obligation to you for having brought me—and the pleasure was the better for a little shame—and when the curtain drew up, what cared we for our place in the house, or what mattered it where we were sitting, when our thoughts were with Rosalind in Arden, or with Viola at the Court of Illyria? You used to say, that the Gallery was the best place of all for enjoying a play



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socially—that the relish of such exhibitions must be in proportion to the infrequency of going—that the company we met there, not being in general readers of plays, were obliged to attend the more, and did attend, to what was going on, on the stage—because a word lost would have been a chasm, which it was impossible for them to fill up. With such reflections we consoled our pride then—and I appeal to you, whether, as a woman, I met generally with less attention and accommodation, than I have done since in more expensive situations in the house? The getting in indeed, and the crowding up those inconvenient staircases, was bad enough,—but there was still a law of civility to women recognised to quite as great an extent as we ever found in the other passages—and how a little difficulty overcome heightened the snug seat, and the play, afterwards! Now we can only pay our money and walk in. You cannot see, you say, in the galleries now. I am sure we saw, and heard too, well enough then—but sight, and all, I think, is gone with our poverty.

“There was pleasure in eating strawberries, before they became quite common—in the first dish of peas, while they were yet dear—to have them for a nice supper, a treat. What treat can we have now? If we were to treat ourselves now—that is, to have dainties a little above our means, it would be selfish and wicked. It is very little more that we allow ourselves beyond what the actual poor can get at, that makes what I call a treat—when two people living together, as we have done, now and then

## OLD CHINA

indulge themselves in a cheap luxury, which both like ; while each apologises, and is willing to take both halves of the blame to his single share. I see no harm in people making much of themselves in that sense of the word. It may give them a hint how to make much of others. But now—what I mean by the word—we never do make much of ourselves. None but the poor can do it. I do not mean the veriest poor of all, but persons as we were, just above poverty.

“I know what you were going to say, that it is mighty pleasant at the end of the year to make all meet—and much ado we used to have every Thirty-first Night of December to account for our exceedings—many a long face did you make over your puzzled accounts, and in contriving to make it out how we had spent so much—or that we had not spent so much—or that it was impossible we should spend so much next year—and still we found our slender capital decreasing—but then, betwixt ways and projects, and compromises of one sort or another, and talk of curtailing this charge, and doing without that for the future—and the hope that youth brings, and laughing spirits (in which you were never poor till now) we pocketed up our loss, and in conclusion, with ‘lusty brimmers’ (as you used to quote it out of *hearty cheerful Mr. Cotton*, as you called him) we used to welcome in the ‘coming guest.’ Now we have no reckoning at all at the end of the old year—no flattering promises about the new year doing better for us.”



## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

Bridget is so sparing of her speech on most occasions, that when she gets into a rhetorical vein, I am careful how I interrupt it. I could not help, however, smiling at the phantom of wealth which her dear imagination had conjured up out of a clear income of a poor—hundred pounds a year. “It is true we were happier when we were poorer, but we were also younger, my cousin. I am afraid we must put up with the excess, for if we were to shake the superflux into the sea, we should not much mend ourselves. That we had much to struggle with, as we grew up together, we have reason to be most thankful. It strengthened, and knit our compact closer. We could never have been what we have been to each other, if we had always had the sufficiency which you now complain of. The resisting power—those natural dilations of the youthful spirit, which circumstances cannot straiten—with us are long since passed away. Competence to age is supplementary youth, a sorry supplement indeed, but I fear the best that is to be had. We must ride, where we formerly walked; live better, and lie softer—and shall be wise to do so—than we had means to do in those good old days you speak of. Yet could those days return—could you and I once more walk our thirty miles a day—could Bannister and Mrs. Bland again be young and you and I be young to see them—could the good old one-shilling gallery days return—they are dreams, my cousin, now—but could you and I at this moment, instead of this quiet argument, by our well-carpeted

## OLD CHINA

fire-side, sitting on this luxurious sofa—be once more struggling up those inconvenient stair-cases, pushed about and squeezed, and elbowed by the poorest rabble of poor gallery scramblers—could I once more hear those anxious shrieks of yours—and the delicious *Thank God, we are safe*, which always followed when the topmost stair, conquered, let in the first light of the whole cheerful theatre down beneath us—I know not the fathom line that ever touched a descent so deep as I would be willing to bury more wealth in than Cræsus had, or the great Jew R—— is supposed to have, to purchase it. And now do just look at that merry little Chinese waiter holding an umbrella, big enough for a bedtester, over the head of that pretty insipid half-Madonaish chit of a lady in that very blue summer house."

## THAT WE SHOULD RISE WITH THE LARK

CHARLES LAMB

AT what precise minute that little airy musician doffs his night gear, and prepares to tune up his unseasonable matins, we are not naturalists enough to determine. But for a mere human gentleman—that has no orchestra business to call him from his warm bed to such preposterous exercises—we take ten, or half after ten (eleven, of course, during this Christmas solstice), to be the very earliest hour, at which he can begin to think of abandoning his pillow. To think of it, we say ; for to do it in earnest, requires another half-hour's good consideration. Not but there are pretty sun-risings, as we are told, and such like gawds, abroad in the world, in summer time especially, some hours before what we have assigned ; which a gentleman may see, as they say, only for getting up. But, having been tempted once or twice, in earlier life, to assist at those ceremonies, we confess our curiosity abated. We are no longer ambitious of being the sun's courtiers, to attend at his morning levees. We hold the good hours of the dawn too sacred to waste them upon such observances ; which have in them, besides, something Pagan and Persic. To say truth, we never anticipated our usual hour, or got up with the sun (as 'tis called),

## THAT WE SHOULD RISE WITH THE LARK

to go a journey, or upon a foolish whole day's pleasuring, but we suffered for it all the long hours after in listlessness and headaches ; Nature herself sufficiently declaring her sense of our presumption in aspiring to regulate our frail waking courses by the measures of that celestial and sleepless traveller. We deny not that there is something sprightly and vigorous, at the outset especially, in these break-of-day excursions. It is flattering to get the start of a lazy world ; to conquer death by proxy in his image. But the seeds of sleep and mortality are in us ; and we pay usually in strange qualms before night falls, the penalty of the unnatural inversion. Therefore, while the busy part of mankind are fast huddling on their clothes, are already up and about their occupations, content to have swallowed their sleep by wholesale ; we choose to linger a-bed and digest our dreams. It is the very time to recombine the wandering images, which night in a confused mass presented ; to snatch them from forgetfulness ; to shape and mould them. Some people have no good of their dreams. Like fast feeders, they gulp them too grossly, to taste them curiously. We love to chew the cud of a foregone vision ; to collect the scattered rays of a brighter phantasm, or act over again, with firmer nerves, the sadder nocturnal tragedies ; to drag into day-light a struggling and half-vanishing night-mare ; to handle and examine the terrors, or the airy solaces. We have too much respect for these spiritual communications, to let them go so lightly. We are not so stupid, or so



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careless, as that Imperial forgetter of his dreams, that we should need a seer to remind us of the form of them. They seem to us to have as much significance as our waking concerns ; or rather to import us more nearly, as more nearly we approach by years to the shadowy world, whither we are hastening. We have shaken hands with the world's business ; we have done with it ; we have discharged ourself of it. Why should we get up ? we have neither suit to solicit, nor affairs to manage. The drama has shut in upon us at the fourth act. We have nothing here to expect, but in a short time a sick bed, and a dismissal. We delight to anticipate death by such shadows as night affords. We are already half acquainted with ghosts. We were never much in the world. Disappointment early struck a dark veil between us and its dazzling illusions. Our spirits showed grey before our hairs. ✓ The mighty changes of the world already appear as but the vain stuff out of which dramas are composed. We have asked no more of life than what the mimic images in play-houses present us with. Even those types have waxed fainter. Our clock appears to have struck. We are SUPERANNUATED. In this dearth of mundane satisfaction, we contract politic alliances with shadows. It is good to have friends at court. The abstracted media of dreams seem no ill introduction to that spiritual presence, upon which, in no long time, we expect to be thrown. We are trying to know a little of the usages of that colony ; to learn the language, and the faces we shall meet

## THAT WE SHOULD RISE WITH THE LARK

with there, that we may be the less awkward at our first coming among them. We willingly call a phantom our fellow, as knowing we shall soon be of their dark companionship. Therefore, we cherish dreams. We try to spell in them the alphabet of the invisible world; and think we know already, how it shall be with us. Those uncouth shapes, which, while we clung to flesh and blood affrighted us, have become familiar. We feel attenuated into their meagre essences, and have given the hand of half-way approach to incorporeal being. We once thought life to be something; but it has unaccountably fallen from us before its time. Therefore we choose to dally with visions. The sun has no purposes of ours to light us to. Why should we get up?

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## ON GOING A JOURNEY

WILLIAM HAZLITT

ONE of the pleasantest things in the world is going a journey ; but I like to go by myself. I can enjoy society in a room ; but out of doors, nature is company enough for me. I am then never less alone than when alone.

“ The fields his study, nature was his book.”

I cannot see the wit of walking and talking at the same time. When I am in the country, I wish to vegetate like the country. I am not for criticising hedge-rows and black cattle. I go out of town in order to forget the town and all that is in it. There are those who for this purpose go to watering-places, and carry the metropolis with them. I like more elbow-room, and fewer encumbrances. I like more solitude, when I give myself up to it, for the sake of solitude ; nor do I ask for

“ . . . a friend in my retreat,  
Whom I may whisper solitude is sweet.”

## ON GOING A JOURNEY

The soul of a journey is liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do just as one pleases. We go a journey chiefly to be free of all impediments and of all inconveniences ; to leave ourselves behind, much more to get rid of others. It is because I want little breathing-space to muse on indifferent matters, where contemplation

“ May plume her feathers and let grow her wings,  
That in the various bustle of resort  
Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impair'd,”

that I absent myself from the town for a while, without feeling at a loss the moment I am left by myself. Instead of a friend in a post-chaise or in a Tilbury, to exchange good things with, and vary the same stale topics over again, for once let me have a truce with impertinence. Give me the clear blue sky over my head, and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three hours' march to dinner—and then to thinking ! It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lone heaths. I laugh, I run, I leap, I sing for joy. From the point of yonder rolling cloud, I plunge into my past being, and revel there, as the sun-burnt Indian plunges headlong into the wave that wafts him to his native shore. Then long-forgotten things, like “sunken wrack and sunless treasures,” burst upon my eager sight, and I begin to feel, think, and be myself again. Instead of an awkward silence, broken by attempts at wit or dull common-places,

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mine is that undisturbed silence of the heart which alone is perfect eloquence. No one likes puns, alliterations, antitheses, argument, and analysis better than I do ; but I sometimes had rather be without them. "Leave, oh, leave me to my repose !" I have just now other business in hand, which would seem idle to you, but is with me "very stuff of the conscience." Is not this wild rose sweet without a comment ? Does not this daisy leap to my heart set in its coat of emerald ? Yet, if I were to explain to you the circumstance that has so endeared it to me, you would only smile. Had I not better then keep it to myself, and let it serve me to brood over, from here to yonder craggy point, and from thence onward to the far-distant horizon ? I should be but bad company all that way, and therefore prefer being alone. I have heard it said that you may, when the moody fit comes on, walk or ride on by yourself, and indulge your reveries. But this looks like a breach of manners, a neglect of others, and you are thinking all the time that you ought to rejoin your party. "Out upon such half-faced fellowship," says I. I like to be either entirely to myself, or entirely at the disposal of others ; to talk or be silent, to walk or sit still, to be sociable or solitary. I was pleased with an observation of Mr. Cobbett's, that "he thought it a bad French custom to drink our wine with our meals, and that an Englishman ought to do only one thing at a time." So I cannot talk and think, or indulge in melancholy musing and lively conversation by fits and starts. "Let me

## ON GOING A JOURNEY

have a companion of my way," says Sterne, "were it but to remark how the shadows lengthen as the sun declines." It is beautifully said: but in my opinion, this continual comparing of notes interferes with the involuntary impression of things upon the mind, and hurts the sentiment. If you only hint what you feel in a kind of dumb show, it is insipid: if you have to explain it, it is making a toil of a pleasure. You cannot read the book of nature, without being perpetually put to the trouble of translating it for the benefit of others. I am for the synthetical method on a journey, in preference to the analytical. I am content to lay in a stock of ideas then, and to examine and anatomise them afterwards. I want to see my vague notions float like the down of the thistle before the breeze, and not to have them entangled in the briars and thorns of controversy. For once, I like to have it all my own way; and this is impossible unless you are alone, or in such company as I do not covet. I have no objection to argue a point with any one for twenty miles of measured road, but not for pleasure. If you remark the scent of a beanfield crossing the road, perhaps your fellow-traveller has no smell. If you point to a distant object, perhaps he is short-sighted, and has to take out his glasses to look at it. There is a feeling in the air, a tone in the colour of a cloud which hits your fancy, but the effect of which you are unable to account for. There is then no sympathy, but an uneasy craving after it, and a dissatisfaction which pursues you on the way, and



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in the end probably produces ill humour. Now I never quarrel with myself, and take all my own conclusions for granted till I find it necessary to defend them against objections. It is not merely that you may not be of accord on the objects and circumstances that present themselves before you—these may recall a number of objects, and lead to associations too delicate and refined to be possibly communicated to others. Yet these I love to cherish, and sometimes still fondly clutch them, when I can escape from the throng to do so. To give way to our feelings before company, seems extravagance or affectation ; and on the other hand, to have to unravel this mystery of our being at every turn, and to make others take an equal interest in it (otherwise the end is not answered) is a task to which few are competent. We must “give it an understanding, but no tongue.” My old friend C——, however, could do both. He could go on in the most delightful explanatory way over hill and dale, a summer’s day, and convert a landscape into a didactic poem or a Pindaric ode. “He talked far above singing.” If I could so clothe my ideas in sounding and flowing words, I might perhaps wish to have some one with me to admire the swelling theme ; or I could be more content, were it possible for me still to hear his echoing voice in the woods of All-Foxden. They had “that fine madness in them which our first poets had” ; and if they could have been caught by some rare instrument, would have breathed such strains as the following :—

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“ . . . Here be woods as green  
As any, air likewise as fresh and sweet  
As when smooth Zephyrus plays on the fleet  
Face of the curled stream, with flow'rs as  
many  
As the young spring gives, and as choice as any ;  
Here be all new delights, cool streams and  
wells,  
Arbours o'ergrown with woodbine, caves and  
dells ;  
Choose where thou wilt, while I sit by and  
sing,  
Or gather rushes to make many a ring  
For thy long fingers ; tell thee tales of  
love,  
How the pale Phœbe, hunting in a grove,  
First saw the boy Endymion, from whose  
eyes  
She took eternal fire that never dies ;  
Here she conveyed him softly in a sleep,  
His temples bound with poppy, to the steep  
Head of old Latmos, where she stoops each  
night,  
Gilding the mountain with her brother's  
light,  
To kiss her sweetest.”

*Faithful Shepherdess.*

Had I words and images at command like these,  
I would attempt to wake the thoughts that lie  
slumbering on golden ridges in the evening clouds :



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but at the sight of nature my fancy, poor as it is, droops and closes up its leaves, like flowers at sunset. I can make nothing out on the spot—I must have time to collect myself.

In general, a good thing spoils out-of-doors prospects : it should be kept for Table-talk. L—— is for this reason, I take it, the worst company in the world out-of-doors ; because he is the best within. I grant, there is one subject on which it is pleasant to talk on a journey ; and that is, what one shall have for supper when we get to our inn at night. The open air improves this sort of conversation or friendly altercation by setting a keener edge on appetite. Every mile of the road heightens the flavour of the viands we expect at the end of it. How fine it is to enter some old town, walled and turreted, just at the approach of nightfall, or to come to some straggling village, with the lights streaming through the surrounding gloom ; and then after inquiring for the best entertainment that the place affords, to “ take one’s ease at one’s inn ! ” These eventful moments in our lives’ history are too precious, too full of solid, heart-felt happiness to be frittered and dribbled away in imperfect sympathy, I would have them all to myself, and drain them to the last drop : they will do to talk of or to write about afterwards. What a delicate speculation it is, after drinking whole goblets of tea, “ The cups that cheer, but not inebriate,” and letting the fumes ascend into the brain, to sit considering what we shall have for supper—eggs and

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a rasher, a rabbit smothered in onions, or an excellent veal cutlet ! Sancho in such a situation once fixed upon cow-heel : and his choice, though he could not help it, is not to be disparaged. Then, in the intervals of pictured scenery and Shandean contemplation, to catch the preparation and the stir in the kitchen—*Procul, O procul este profani !* These hours are sacred to silence and to musing, to be treasured up in the memory, and to feed the source of smiling thoughts hereafter. I would not waste them in idle talk ; or if I must have the integrity of fancy broken in upon, I would rather it were by a stranger than a friend. A stranger takes his hue and character from the time and place ; he is a part of the furniture and costume of an inn. If he is a Quaker, or from the West Riding of Yorkshire, so much the better. I do not even try to sympathise with him, and he breaks no squares. I associate nothing with my travelling companion, but present objects and passing events. In his ignorance of me and my affairs, I in a manner forget myself. But a friend reminds one of other things, rips up old grievances, and destroys the abstraction of the scene. He comes in ungraciously between us and our imaginary character. Something is dropped in the course of conversation that gives a hint of your profession and pursuits ; or from having some one with you that knows the less sublime portions of your history, it seems that other people do. You are no longer a citizen of the world : but your “unhoused free condition is put into circumscription

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

and confine." The *incognito* of an inn is one of its striking privileges—"lord of one's self, uncumber'd with a name." Oh! it is great to shake off the trammels of the world and of public opinion—to lose our importunate, tormenting, everlasting personal identity in the elements of nature, and become the creature of the moment, clear of all ties—to hold to the universe only by a dish of sweet-breads, and to owe nothing but the score of the evening—and no longer seeking for applause and meeting with contempt, to be known by no other title than *the Gentleman in the Parlour*! One may take one's choice of all characters in this romantic state of uncertainty as to one's real pretensions, and become indefinitely respectable and negatively rightworshipful. We baffle prejudice and disappoint conjecture; and from being so to others begin to be objects of curiosity and wonder even to ourselves. We are no more those hackneyed commonplaces that we appear in the world: an inn restores us to the level of nature, and quits scores with society! I have certainly spent some enviable hours at inns—sometimes when I have been left entirely to myself, and have tried to solve some metaphysical problem, as once at Witham-common, where I found out the proof that likeness is not a case of the association of ideas—at other times, when there have been pictures in the room, as at St. Neot's (I think it was), where I first met with Gribelin's engravings of the Cartoons, into which I entered at once, and at a little inn on the borders

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of Wales, where there happened to be hanging some of Westall's drawings, which I compared triumphantly (for a theory that I had, not for the admired artist) with the figure of a girl who had ferried me over the Severn, standing up in the boat between me and the twilight—at other times I might mention luxuriating in books, with a peculiar interest in this way as I remember sitting up half the night to read Paul and Virginia, which I picked up at an inn at Bridgewater, after being drenched in the rain all day; and at the same place I got through two volumes of Madame D'Arblay's Camilla. It was on the tenth of April, 1798, that I sat down to a volume of the New Eloise, at the inn at Llangollen, over a bottle of sherry and a cold chicken. The letter I chose was that in which St. Preux describes his feelings as he first caught a glimpse from the heights of the Jura of the Pays de Vaud, which I had brought with me as a *bon bouche* to crown the evening with. It was my birthday, and I had for the first time come from a place in the neighbourhood to visit this delightful spot. The road to Llangollen turns off between Chirk and Wrexham; and on passing a certain point, you come all at once upon the valley, which opens like an amphitheatre, broad, barren hills rising in majestic state on either side, "green upland swells that echo to the bleat of flocks" below, and the river Dee babbling over its stony bed in the midst of them. The valley at this time "glittered green with sunny showers," and a budding ash tree dipped its tender



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branches in the chiding stream. How proud, how glad I was to walk along the high road that overlooks the delicious prospect, repeating the lines which I have just quoted from Mr. Coleridge's poems. But besides the prospect which opened beneath my feet, another also opened to my inward sight, a heavenly vision, on which were written, in letters large as Hope could make them, these four words, LIBERTY, GENIUS, LOVE, VIRTUE ; which have since faded into the light of common day, or mock my idle gaze.

“ The beautiful is vanished, and returns not.”

Still, I would return some time or other to this enchanted spot ; but I would return to it alone. What other self could I find to share that influx of thoughts, of regret and delight, the fragments of which I could hardly conjure up to myself, so much have they been broken and defaced ! I could stand on some tall rock, and overlook the precipice of years that separates me from what I then was. I was at that time going shortly to visit the poet whom I have above named. Where is he now ? Not only I myself have changed ; the world, which was then new to me, has become old and incorrigible. Yet will I turn to thee in thought, O sylvan Dee, in joy, in youth and gladness as thou then wert ; and thou shalt always be to me the river of Paradise, where I will drink of the waters of life freely !

There is hardly anything that shows the short-sightedness or capriciousness of the imagination more than travelling does. With change of place

we change our ideas ; nay, our opinions and feelings. We can by an effort indeed transport ourselves to old and long-forgotten scenes, and then the picture of the mind revives again ; but we forget those that we have just left. It seems that we can think but of one place at a time. The canvas of the fancy is but of a certain extent, and if we paint one set of objects upon it, they immediately efface every other. We cannot enlarge our conceptions, we only shift our point of view. The landscape bares its bosom to the enraptured eye, we take our fill of it, and seem as if we could form no other image of beauty or grandeur. We pass on, and think no more of it : the horizon that shuts it from our sight, also blots it from our memory like a dream. In travelling through a wild barren country, I can form no idea of a woody and cultivated one. It appears to me that all the world must be barren like what I see of it. In the country we forget the town, and in town we despise the country. "Beyond Hyde Park," says Sir Fopling Flutter, "all is a desert." All that part of the map that we do not see before us is a blank. The world in our conceit of it is not much bigger than a nutshell. It is not one prospect expanded into another, county joined to county, kingdom to kingdom, lands to seas, making an image voluminous and vast ; the mind can form no larger idea of space than the eye can take in at a single glance. The rest is a name written in a map, a calculation of arithmetic. For instance, what is the true significance of that immense mass of



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territory and population, known by the name of China to us ? An inch of paste-board on a wooden globe, of no more account than a China orange ! Things near us are seen of the size of life : things at a distance are diminished to the size of the understanding. We measure the universal by ourselves, and even comprehend the texture of our own being only piece-meal. In this way, however, we remember an infinity of things and places. The mind is like a mechanical instrument that plays a great variety of tunes, but it must play them in succession. One idea recalls another, but it at the same time excludes all others. In trying to renew old recollections, we cannot as it were unfold the whole web of our existence ; we must pick out the single threads. So in coming to a place where we have formerly lived and with which we have intimate associations, every one must have found that the feeling grows more vivid the nearer we approach the spot, from the mere anticipation of the actual impression : we remember circumstances, feelings, persons, faces, names, that we had not thought of for years ; but for the time all the rest of the world is forgotten ! To return to the question I have quitted above.

I have no objection to go to see ruins, aqueducts, pictures, in company with a friend or a party, but rather the contrary, for the former reason reversed. They are intelligible matters, and will bear talking about. The sentiment here is not tacit, but communicable and overt. Salisbury Plain is barren of criticism, but Stonehenge will bear a discussion

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antiquarian, picturesque and philosophical. In setting out on a party of pleasure, the first consideration always is where we shall go to: in taking a solitary ramble, the question is what we shall meet with by the way. "The mind is its own place;" nor are we anxious to arrive at the end of our journey. I can myself do the honours indifferently well to works of art and curiosity. I once took a party to Oxford with no mean *éclat*—shewed them that seat of the Muses at a distance.

"With glistering spires and pinnacles adorn'd"  
—descanted on the learned air that breathes from the grassy quadrangles and stone walls of halls and colleges—was at home in the Bodleian; and at Blenheim quite superseded the powdered Ciceroni that attended us, and that pointed in vain with his wand to commonplace beauties in matchless pictures. As another exception to the above reasoning, I should not feel confident in venturing on a journey in a foreign country without a companion. I should want at intervals to hear the sound of my own language. There is an involuntary antipathy in the mind of an Englishman to foreign manners and notions that requires the assistance of social sympathy to carry it off. As the distance from home increases, this relief, which was at first a luxury, becomes a passion and an appetite. A person would almost feel stifled to find himself in the deserts of Arabia without friends and countrymen: there must be allowed to be something in the

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view of Athens or old Rome that claims the utterance of speech ; and I own that the Pyramids are too mighty for any simple contemplation. In such situations, so opposite to all one's ordinary train of ideas, one seems a species by one's self, a limb torn off from society, unless one can meet it with instant fellowship and support. Yet I did not feel this want or craving very pressing once, when I first set my foot on the laughing shores of France. Calais was peopled with novelty and delight. The confused busy murmur of the place was like oil and wine poured into my ears ; nor did the mariners' hymn, which was sung from the top of an old crazy vessel in the harbour, as the sun went down, send an alien sound into my soul. I only breathed the air of general humanity. I walked over "the vine-covered hills and gay regions of France," erect and chained to the foot of arbitrary thrones : I was at no loss for language, for that of all the great schools of painting was open to me. The whole is vanished like a shade. Pictures, heroes, glory, freedom, all are fled : nothing remains but the Bourbons and the French people ! There is undoubtedly a sensation in travelling into foreign parts that is to be had nowhere else : but it is more pleasing at the time than lasting. It is too remote from our habitual associations to be a common topic of discourse or reference, and, like a dream or another state of existence, does not piece into our daily modes of life. It is an animated but a momentary hallucination. It demands an effort to exchange our actual

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for our ideal identity ; and to feel the pulse of our old transports revive very keenly, we must “ jump ” all our present comforts and connexions. Our romantic and itinerant character is not to be domesticated. Dr. Johnson remarked how little foreign travel added to the facilities of conversation in those who had been abroad. In fact, the time we have spent there is both delightful and in one sense instructive ; but it appears to be cut out of our substantial, downright existence, and never to join kindly on to it. We are not the same, but another, and perhaps more enviable individual, all the time we are out of our own country. We are lost to ourselves, as well as our friends. So the poet somewhat quaintly sings,

“ Out of my country and myself I go.”

Those who wish to forget painful thoughts, do well to absent themselves for a while from the ties and objects that recall them : but we can be said only to fulfil our destiny in the place that gave us birth. I should on this account like well enough to spend the whole of my life in travelling abroad, if I could anywhere borrow another life to spend afterwards at home !



## GETTING UP ON COLD MORNINGS

LEIGH HUNT

AN Italian author—Giulio Cordara, a Jesuit—has written a poem upon insects, which he begins by insisting, that those troublesome and abominable little animals were created for our annoyance, and that they were certainly not inhabitants of Paradise. We of the north may dispute this piece of theology ; but on the other hand, it is clear as the snow on the house-tops, that Adam was not under the necessity of shaving ; and that when Eve walked out of her delicious bower, she did not step upon ice three inches thick.

Some people say it is a very easy thing to get up of a cold morning. You have only, they tell you, to take the resolution ; and the thing is done. This may be very true ; just as a boy at school has only to take a flogging, and the thing is over. But we have not at all made up our minds upon it ; and we find it a very pleasant exercise to discuss the matter, candidly, before we get up. This at least is not idling, though it may be lying. It affords an excellent answer to those, who ask how lying in bed can be indulged in by a reasoning being—a rational creature. How ? Why, with the argument calmly at work in one's head, and the clothes over



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one's shoulder. Oh ! it is a fine way of spending a sensible, impartial half-hour.

If these people would be more charitable, they would get on with their argument much better. But they are apt to reason so ill, and to assert so dogmatically, that one could wish to have them stand round one's bed of a bitter morning, and lie before their faces. They ought to hear both sides of the bed, the inside and the out. If they cannot entertain themselves with their own thoughts for half-an-hour or so, it is not the fault of those who can. If their will is never pulled aside by the enticing arms of imagination, so much the luckier for the stage-coachman.

Candid enquiries into one's decumbency, besides the greater or less privileges to be allowed a man in proportion to his ability of keeping early hours, the work given his faculties, etc., will at least concede their due merits to such representations as the following. In the first place, says the injured but calm appealer, I have been warm all night, and find my system in a state perfectly suitable to a warm-blooded animal. To get out of this state into the cold, besides the inharmonious and uncritical abruptness of the transition, is so unnatural to such a creature, that the poets, repining upon the tortures of the damned, made one of their greatest agonies consist in being suddenly transported from heat to cold—from fire to ice. They are "haled" out of their "beds," says Milton, by "harpy-footed furies"—fellows who come to call them. On my first

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movement towards the anticipation of getting up, I find that such parts of the sheet and bolster, as are exposed to the air of the room, are stone cold. On opening my eyes, the first thing that meets them is my own breath rolling forth, as if in the open air, like smoke out of a cottage chimney. Think of this symptom. Then I turn my eyes sideways and see the window all frozen over. Think of that. Then the servant comes in, "It is very cold this morning, is it not?"—"Very cold, Sir." "Very cold indeed, isn't it?"—"Very cold indeed, Sir.—"More than usually so, isn't it, even for this weather?" (Here the servant's wit and good nature are put to considerable test, and the inquirer lies on thorns for the answer.) "Why, Sir . . . I think it *is*." (Good creature! There is not a better, or more truth-telling servant going.) "I must rise, however—get me some warm water."—Here comes a fine interval between the departure of the servant and the arrival of the hot water; during which, of course, it is of "no use" to get up. The hot water comes. "Is it quite hot?"—"Yes, Sir."—"Perhaps too hot for shaving: I must wait a little?"—"No, Sir, it will just do." (There is an over-nice propriety sometimes, an officious zeal of virtue, a little troublesome.) "Oh—the shirt—you must air my clean shirt;—linen gets very damp this weather."—"Yes, Sir." Here another delicious five minutes. A knock at the door. "Oh, the shirt—very well. My stockings—I think the stockings had better be aired too."—"Very well, Sir."—Here another interval. At length

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everything is ready, except myself. I now, continues our incumbent (a happy word, by the bye, for a country vicar).—I now cannot help thinking a good deal—who can ? upon the unnecessary and villainous custom of shaving : it is a thing so unmanly (here I nestle closer)—so effeminate (here I recoil from an unlucky step into the colder part of the bed). No wonder that the Queen of France took part with the rebels against the degenerate King, her husband, who first affronted her smooth visage with a face like her own. The Emperor Julian never showed the luxuriance of his genius to better advantage than in reviving the flowing beard. Look at Cardinal Bembo's picture—at Michael Angelo's—at Titian's—at Shakespeare's—at Fletcher's—at Spencer's—at Chaucer's—at Aldred's—at Plato's—I could name a great man for every tick of my watch. Look at the Turks, a grave and otiose people—think of Haroun Al Raschid and Bed-ridden Hassan. Think of Wortley Montagu, the worthy son of his mother, a man above the prejudice of his time. Look at the Persian gentlemen, whom one is ashamed of meeting about the suburbs, their dress and appearance are so much finer than our own. Lastly, think of the razor itself—how totally opposed to every sensation of bed—how cold, how edgy, how hard ! how utterly different from anything like the warm and circling amplitude, which

Sweetly recommends itself  
Unto our gentle senses.

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Add to this, benumbed fingers, which may help you to cut yourself, a quivering body, a frozen towel, and a ewer full of ice ; and he that says there is nothing to oppose in all this, only shows, at any rate, that he has no merit in opposing it.

Thomson, the poet, who exclaims in his Seasons—

“ Falsely luxurious ! will not man awake ? ”

used to lie in bed till noon, because he said he had no motive in getting up. He could imagine the good of rising ; but then he could also imagine the good of lying still ; and his exclamation, it must be allowed, was made upon summer-time, not winter. We must proportion the argument to the individual character. A money-getter may be drawn out of his bed by three and four pence ; but this will not suffice for a student. A proud man may say, “ What shall I think of myself, if I don't get up ? ” but the more humble one will be content to waive this prodigious notion of himself, out of respect to his kindly bed. The mechanical man shall get up without any ado at all ; and so shall the barometer. An ingenious liar in bed will find hard matter of discussion even on the score of health and longevity. He will ask us for our proofs and precedents of the ill effects of lying later in cold weather ; and sophisticate much on the advantages of an even temperature of body ; of the natural propensity (pretty universal) to have one's way ; and of the animals that roll themselves up and sleep all the winter. As to longevity, he will ask whether the



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longest life is of necessity the best ; and whether Holborn is the handsomest street in London.

We only know of one confounding, not to say confounded argument, fit to overturn the huge luxury, the "enormous bliss"—of the vice in question. A liar in bed may be allowed to profess a disinterested indifference for his health or longevity ; but while he is showing the reasonableness of consulting his own or one person's comfort, he must admit the proportionate claim of more than one ; and the best way to deal with him is this, especially for a lady ; for we earnestly recommend the use of that sex on such occasions, if not somewhat *over-persuasive* ; since extremes have an awkward knack of meeting. First then, admit all the ingeniousness of what he says, telling him that the bar has been deprived of an excellent lawyer. Then look at him in the most good-natured manner in the world, with a mixture of assent and appeal in your countenance, and tell him that you are waiting breakfast for him ; that you never like to breakfast without him ; that you really want it too ; that the servants want theirs ; that you shall not know how to get the house into order, unless he rises ; and that you are sure he would do things twenty-times worse, even than getting out of his warm bed, to put them all into good humour and a state of comfort. Then, after having said this, throw in the comparatively indifferent matter, to *him*, about his health ; but tell him that it is no indifferent matter to you ; that the sight of his illness makes more people suffer



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than one ; but that, if, nevertheless, he really does feel so very sleepy and so very much refreshed by— Yet stay ; we hardly know whether the frailty of a —Yes, yes ; say that too, especially if you say it with sincerity ; for if the weakness of human nature on the one hand and the *vis inertiae* on the other, should lead him to take advantage of it once or twice, good humour and sincerity form an irresistible junction at last ; and are still better and warmer things than pillows and blankets.

Other little helps of appeal may be thrown in, as occasion requires. You may tell a lover, for instance, that lying in bed makes people corpulent ; a father, that you wish him to complete the fine manly example he sets his children ; a lady, that she will injure her bloom or her shape, which M. or W. admires so much ; and a student, or artist, that he is always so glad to have done a good day's work, in his best manner.

*Reader :* And pray, Mr. Indicator, how do *you* behave yourself in this respect ?

*Indic. :* Oh, Madam, perfectly, of course ; like all advisers.

*Reader :* Nay, I allow that your mode of argument does not look quite so suspicious as the old way of sermonising and severity, but I have my doubts, especially from that laugh of yours. If I should look in to-morrow morning——

*Indic. :* Ah, Madam, the look in of a face like yours does anything with me. It shall fetch me up at nine, if you please—*six*, I meant to say.

## THE OLD LADY

LEIGH HUNT

IF the Old Lady is a widow and lives alone, the manners of her condition and time of life are so much the more apparent. She generally dresses in plain silks, that make a gentle rustling as she moves about the silence of her room ; and she wears a nice cap with a lace border, that comes under the chin. In a placket at her side is an old enamelled watch, unless it is locked up in a drawer of her toilet, for fear of accidents. Her waist is rather tight and trim, than otherwise, as she had a fine one when young ; and she is not sorry if you see a pair of her stockings on a table, that you may be aware of the neatness of her leg and foot. Contented with these and other evident indications of a good shape, and letting her young friends understand that she can afford to obscure it a little, she wears pockets, and uses them well too. In the one is her handkerchief, and any heavier matter that is not likely to come out with it, such as the change of a sixpence ; in the other is a miscellaneous assortment, consisting of a pocket-book, a bunch of keys, a needle-case, a spectacle-case, crumbs of biscuit, a nutmeg and grater, a smelling bottle, and, according to the season, an orange or apple, which after many days

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she draws out, warm and glossy, to give to some little child that has well behaved itself. She generally occupies two rooms, in the neatest condition possible. In the chamber is a bed with a white coverlet, built up high and round, to look well, and with curtains of a pastoral pattern, consisting alternately of large plants, and shepherds and shepherdesses. On the mantel-piece are more shepherds and shepherdesses, with dot-eyed sheep at their feet, all in coloured ware : the man, perhaps, in a pink jacket and knots of ribbons at his knees and shoes, holding his crook lightly in one hand and with the other at his breast, turning his toes out and looking tenderly at the shepherdess : the woman holding a crook also, and modestly returning his look, with a gipsy-hat jerked up behind, a very slender waist, with petticoats and hips to *counteract*, and the petticoat pulled up through the pocket-holes, in order to show the trimness of her ankles. But these patterns, of course, are various. The toilet is ancient, carved at the edges, and tied about with a snow-white drapery of muslin. Beside it are various boxes, mostly japan ; and the set of drawers are exquisite things for a little girl to rummage, if ever little girl be so bold—containing ribbons and laces of various kinds ; linen smelling of lavender, of the flowers of which there is always dust in the corners ; a heap of pocket-books for a series of years ; and pieces of dress long gone by, such as head-fronts, stomachers, and flowered satin shoes, with enormous heels. The stock of *letters* are under

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especial lock and key. So much for the bedroom. In the sitting-room is rather a spare assortment of shining old mahogany furniture, or carved arm-chairs equally old, with chintz draperies down to the ground ; a folding or other screen, with Chinese figures, their round little eyed, meek faces perking sideways ; a stuffed bird, perhaps in a glass-case (a living one is too much for her) ; a portrait of her husband over the mantel-piece, in a coat with frog-buttons, and a delicate frilled hand lightly inserted in the waistcoat ; and opposite him on the wall, is a piece of embroidered literature, framed and glazed, containing some moral distich or maxim, worked in angular capital letters, with two trees of parrots below, in their proper colours ; the whole concluding with an A.B.C. and numerals, and the name of the fair industrious, expressing it to be "her work, Jan. 14, 1762." The rest of the furniture consists of a looking-glass with carved edges, perhaps a settee, a hassock for the feet, a mat for the little dog, and a small set of shelves, in which are the "Spectator" and "Guardian," the "Turkish Spy," a Bible and Prayer Book, Young's "Night Thoughts" with a piece of lace in it to flatten, Mrs. Row's "Devout Exercises of the Heart," Mrs. Glasse's "Cookery" and perhaps "Sir Charles Grandison" and "Clarissa." "John Buncl" is in the closet among the pickles and preserves. The clock is on the landing-place between the two room doors, where it ticks audibly but quietly, and the landing-place, as well as the stairs, is carpeted to a nicety.



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The house is most in character, and properly coeval, if it is in a retired suburb, and strongly built, with wainscot rather than paper inside, and lockers in the windows. Before the windows should be some quivering poplars. Here the Old Lady receives a few quiet visitors to tea, and perhaps an early game of cards : or you may see her going out on the same kind of visit herself, with a light umbrella running up into a stick and crooked ivory handle and her little dog, equally famous for his love to her and captious antipathy to strangers. Her grandchildren dislike him on holidays, and the boldest sometimes ventures to give him a sly kick under the table. When she returns at night, she appears, if the weather happens to be doubtful, in a calash ; and her servant in pattens, follows half behind and half at her side, with a lantern.

Her opinions are not many, nor new. She thinks the clergyman a nice man. The Duke of Wellington, is her opinion, is a very great man ; but she has a secret preference for the Marquis of Granby. She thinks the young women of the present day too forward, and the men not respectful enough ; but hopes her grand-children will be better ; though she differs with her daughter in several points respecting their management. She sets little value on the new accomplishments ; is a great though delicate connoisseur in butcher's meat and all sorts of housewifery ; and if you mention waltzes, expatiates on the grace and fine breeding of the minuet. She longs to have seen one danced by Sir Charles



## THE OLD LADY

Grandison, whom she almost considers as a real person. She likes a walk of a summer's evening, but avoids the new streets, canals, etc., and sometimes goes through the churchyard, where her other children and her husband lie buried, serious, but not melancholy. She has had three great epochs in her life: her marriage—her having been at Court, to see the King and Queen and Royal Family—and a compliment on her figure she once received, in passing, from Mr. Wilkes, whom she describes as a sad, loose man, but engaging. His plainness she thinks much exaggerated. If anything takes her at a distance from home, it is still the Court; but she seldom stirs, even for that. The last time but one that she went, was to see the Duke of Wurtemberg; and most probably for the last time of all, to see the Princess Charlotte and Prince Leopold. From this beatific vision she returned with the same admiration as ever for the fine comely appearance of the Duke of York and the rest of the family, and great delight at having had a near view of the Princess, whom she speaks of with smiling pomp and lifted mittens, clasping them as passionately as she can together, and calling her, in a transport of mixed loyalty and self-love, a fine royal young creature, and "Daughter of England."

## A “NOW”

### *Descriptive of a Hot Day*

LEIGH HUNT

Now the rosy—(and lazy) fingered Aurora, issuing from her saffron house, calls up the moist vapours to surround her, and goes veiled with them as long as she can ; till Phœbus, coming forth in his power, looks everything out of the sky, and holds sharp, uninterrupted empire from his throne of beams. Now the mower begins to make his sweeping cuts more slowly, and resorts oftener to the beer. Now the carter sleeps a-top of his load of hay, or plods with double slouch of shoulder, looking out with eyes winking under his shading hat, and with a hitch upward of one side of his mouth. Now the little girl at her grandmother's cottage door watches the coaches that go by, with her hand held up over her sunny forehead. Now labourers look well resting in their white shirts at the doors of rural ale-houses. Now an elm is fine there, with a seat under it ; and horses drink out of the trough, stretching their yearning necks with loosened collars ; and the traveller calls for his glass of ale, having been without one for more than ten minutes ; and his horse stands wincing at the flies, giving sharp

## A "NOW"

shivers of his skin, and moving to and fro his ineffectual docked tail ; and now Miss Betty Wilson, the host's daughter, comes streaming forth in a flowered gown and ear-rings, carrying with four of her beautiful fingers the foaming glass, for which, after the traveller has drank it, she receives with an indifferent eye looking another way the lawful twopence. Now grasshoppers "fry," as Dryden says. Now cattle stand in water, and ducks are envied. Now boots, and shoes, and trees by the roadside are thick with dust ; and dogs, rolling in it, after issuing out of the water, into which they have been thrown to fetch sticks, come scattering horror among the legs of the spectators. Now a fellow who finds he has three miles further to go in a pair of tight shoes is in a pretty situation. Now rooms with the sun upon them become intolerable ; and the apothecary's apprentice, with a bitterness beyond aloes, thinks of the pond he used to bathe in at school. Now men with powdered heads (especially if thick) envy those that are unpowdered, and stop to wipe them up hill, with countenances that seem to expostulate with destiny. Now boys assemble round the village pump with a ladle to it, and delight to make a forbidden splash and get wet through the shoes. Now also they make suckers of leather, and bathe all day long in rivers and ponds and make mighty fishings for "tittle-bats." Now the bee, as he hums along, seems to be talking heavily of the heat. Now doors and brick walls are burning to the hand ; and a walled lane, with dust

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

and broken bottles in it, near a brick-field, is a thing not to be thought of. Now a green lane, on the contrary, thick-set with hedgerow elms, and having the noise of a brook "rumbling in pebble-stone," is one of the pleasantest things in the world.

Now, in town, gossips talk more than ever to one another, in rooms, in doorways, and out of the window, always beginning the conversation with saying that the heat is overpowering. Now blinds are let down, and doors thrown open, and flannel waistcoats left off, and cold meat preferred to hot, and wonder expressed why tea continues so refreshing and people delight to sliver lettuces into bowls, and apprentices water doorways with tin canisters that lay several atoms of dust. Now the water-cart, jumbling along the middle of the street, and jolting the showers out of its box of water, really does something. Now fruiterers' shops and dairies look pleasant, and ices are the only things to those who can get them. Now ladies loiter in baths; and people make presents of flowers; and wine is put into ice; and the after-dinner lounge recreates his head with applications of perfumed water out of long-necked bottles. Now the lounge, who cannot resist riding his new horse, feels his boots burn him. Now buckskins are not the lawn of Cos. Now jockeys, walking in greatcoats to lose flesh, curse inwardly. Now five fat people in a stage-coach hate the sixth fat one who is coming in, and think he has no right to be so large. Now clerks in office do nothing but drink soda-water and spruce-beer,

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and read the newspaper. Now the old-clothesman drops his solitary cry more deeply into the areas on the hot and forsaken side of the street ; and bakers look vicious ; and the cooks are aggravated ; and the steam of the tavern-kitchen catches hold of us like the breath of Tartarus. Now delicate skins are beset with gnats ; and boys make their sleeping companion start up, with playing a burning-glass on his hand ; and black-smiths are super-carbonated ; and cobblers in their stalls almost feel a wish to be transplanted ; and butter is too easy to spread ; and the dragoons wonder whether the Romans liked their helmets ; and old ladies, with their lappets unpinned, walk along in a state of dilapidation ; and the servant maids are afraid they look vulgarly hot ; and the author, who has a plate of strawberries brought him, finds that he has come to the end of his writing.



# THE USES OF LITERATURE

THOMAS HOOD

TO

THE MANCHESTER ATHENÆUM

(from my bed)

17 ELM TREE ROAD,  
ST. JOHN'S WOOD,  
18 *July*, 1843.

GENTLEMEN,

If my humble name can be of the least use for your purpose, it is heartily at your service, with my best wishes for the prosperity of the Manchester Athenæum, and my warmest approval of the objects of that Institution.

I have elsewhere recorded my own deep obligations to Literature—that a natural turn for reading and intellectual pursuits, probably preserved one from the moral shipwreck so apt to befall those who are deprived in early life of the paternal pilotage. At the very least my books kept me aloof from the ring, the dog-pit, the tavern, and the saloons with their degrading orgies. For the closet associate of Pope and Addison, the mind accustomed to the noble, though silent discourse of Shakespeare and Milton, will hardly seek, or put up with low company

## THE USES OF LITERATURE

and slang. The reading animal will not be content with the brutish wallowings that satisfy the unlearned pigs of the world. Later experience enables me to depose to the comfort and blessing that literature can prove in seasons of sickness and sorrow ; how powerfully intellectual pursuits can help in keeping the head from crazing, and the heart from breaking ; nay, not to be too grave, how generous mental food can even atone for a meagre diet ; rich fare on the paper, for short commons on the cloth.

Poisoned by the malaria of the Dutch marshes, my stomach for many months resolutely set itself against fish, flesh, or fowl ; my appetite had no more edge than the German knife placed before me. But luckily the mental palate and digestion were still sensible and vigorous ; and whilst I passed untasted every dish at the Rhenish table-d'hôte, I could still enjoy my *Peregrine Pickle*, and the feast after the manner of the Ancients. There was no yearning towards calf's head *à la tortue*, or sheep's heart ; but I could still relish Head *à la Brunnen*, and the *Heart of Midlothian*. Still more recently it was my misfortune, with a tolerable appetite, to be condemned to Lenten fare, like Sancho Panza, by my physician, to a diet, in fact, lower than any prescribed by the Poor Law Commissioners, all animal food, from a bullock to a rabbit, being strictly interdicted, as well as all fluids stronger than that which lays dust, washes pinafores, and waters polyanthus. But the feast of reason and the flow of soul were still mine !

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Denied beef, I had Bulwer and Cowper ; forbidden mutton, there was Lamb ; and in lieu of pork, the great Bacon, or Hogg. Then as to beverage ; it was hard, doubtless, for a Christian to set his face, like a Turk, against the juice of the grape. But, eschewing wine, I had still my Butler ; and in the absence of liquor, all the Choice Spirits from Tom Browne to Tom Moore. Thus though confined physically to the drink that drowns kittens, I quaffed mentally, not merely the best of our own home-made, but the rich, racy, sparkling growths of France and Italy, of Germany and Spain ; the champagne of Molière, the Monte Pulicano of Boccaccio, the hock of Schiller, and the sherry of Cervantes. Depressed bodily by the fluid that damps everything, I got intellectually elevated with Milton, a little merry with Swift, or rather jolly with Rabelais, whose Pantagruel, by the way, is equal to the best gruel with rum in it.

So far can Literature palliate, or compensate, for gastronomical privations. But there are other evils, great and small, in this world, which try the stomach less than the head, the heart, and the temper ; bowls that will not roll right, well-laid schemes that will "gang alee," and ill winds that blow with the pertinacity of the monsoon. Of these, Providence has allotted me a full share, but still, paradoxical as it may sound, my *burthen* has been greatly lightened by a *load of books*. The manner of this will be best understood by a *feline* illustration. Everybody has heard of the two Kilkenny cats who

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devoured each other ; but it is not so generally known, that they left behind them an orphan kitten, which, true to its breed, began to eat itself up, till it was diverted from the operation by a mouse. Now the human mind, under vexation, is like that kitten, for it is apt to *prey upon itself*, unless drawn off by a new object, and none better for the purpose than a book. For example, one of Defoe's ; for who, in reading his thrilling *History of the Great Plague*, would not be reconciled to a few little ones ?

Many, many a dreary weary hour have I got over—many a gloomy misgiving postponed—many a mental and bodily annoyance forgotten by help of the tragedies, and comedies, of our dramatists and novelists ! Many a trouble has been soothed by the still small voice of the moral philosopher ; many a dragon-like care charmed to sleep by the sweet song of the poet ! For all which I cry incessantly, not aloud, but in my heart, “ Thanks and honour to the glorious masters of the pen, and the great inventors of the press ! ” Such has been my own experience of the blessing and comfort of literature and intellectual pursuits ; and of the same mind, doubtless, was Sir Humphry Davy, who went for *Consolations in Travel*, not to the inn, or the posting-house, but to his library and his books.

## WINTER IN "OUR VILLAGE"

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD

Now we have reached the trees—the beautiful trees! never so beautiful as to-day. Imagine the effect of a straight and regular double avenue of oaks, nearly a mile long, arching overhead, and closing into perspective like the roof and columns of a cathedral, every tree and branch incrustated with the bright and delicate congelation of hoar-frost, white and pure as snow, delicate and refined as carved ivory. How beautiful it is, how uniform, how various, how filling, how satiating to the eye and to the mind—above all, how melancholy! There is a thrilling awfulness, an intense feeling of simple power in that naked and colourless beauty, which falls on the earth like the thoughts of death—death pure, and glorious, and smiling—but still death. Sculpture has always the same effect on my imagination, and painting never. Colour is life.

We are now at the end of this magnificent avenue, and at the top of a steep eminence commanding a wide view over four counties—a landscape of snow. A deep lane leads abruptly down the hill; a mere narrow cart track, sinking between high banks clothed with fern and furze and low broom, crowned with luxuriant hedgerows, and famous for their



## WINTER IN "OUR VILLAGE"

summer smell of thyme. How lovely these banks are now—the tall weeds and the gorse fixed and stiffened in the hoar-frost, which fringes round the bright prickly holly, the pendent foliage of the bramble, and the deep orange leaves of the pollard oaks. O, this is rime in its loveliest form ! And there is still a berry here and there on the holly, "blushing in its natural coral" through the delicate tracery, still a stray hip or haw for the birds, who abound here always.

The poor birds, how tame they are, how sadly tame ! There is the beautiful and rare crested wren, "that shadow of a bird," as White of Selborne calls it, perched in the middle of the hedge, nestling as it were amongst the cold bare boughs, seeking, poor pretty thing, for the warmth it will not find. And there, farther on, just under the bank, by the slender runlet, which still trickles between its transparent fantastic margin of thin ice, as if it were a thing of life—there, with a swift, scudding motion, flits, in short low flights, the gorgeous kingfisher, its magnificent plumage of scarlet and blue flashing in the sun, like the glories of some tropical bird. He is come for water to this little spring by the hillside—water which even his long bill and slender head can hardly reach, so nearly do the fantastic forms of those garland-like icy margins meet over the tiny stream beneath. It is rarely that one sees the shy beauty so close or so long ; and it is pleasant to see him in the grace and beauty of his natural liberty, the only way to look at a bird.

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We used, before we lived in a street, to fix a little board outside the parlour window, and cover it with bread crumbs in the hard weather. It was quite delightful to see the pretty things come and feed, to conquer their shyness, and do away their mistrust. First came the more social tribes, "the robin red breast and the wren," cautiously, suspiciously, picking up a crumb on the wing, with the little keen bright eye fixed on the window ; then they would stop for two pecks ; then stay till they were satisfied. The shyer birds, tamed by their example, came next ; and at last one saucy fellow of a blackbird—a sad glutton, he would clear the board in two minutes—used to tap his bill against the window for more. How we loved the fearless confidence of that fine, frank-hearted creature ! And surely he loved us. I wonder the practice is not more general. " May ! May ! naughty May !" she has frightened away the kingfisher ; and now, in her coaxing penitence, she is covering me with snow. " Come, pretty May ! it is time to go home."

## AN AUGUST DAY IN MARSEILLES

CHARLES DICKENS

THIRTY years ago, Marseilles lay in the burning sun one day.

A blazing sun upon a fierce August day was no greater rarity in southern France then, than at any other time, before or since. Everything in Marseilles, and about Marseilles, had stared at the fervid sky, and been stared at in return, until a staring habit had become universal there. Strangers were stared out of countenance by staring white houses, staring white walls, staring white streets, staring tracts of arid road, staring hills from which verdure was burnt away. The only things to be seen not fixedly staring and glaring were the vines drooping under their load of grapes. They did occasionally wink a little as the hot air barely moved their faint leaves.

There was no wind to make a ripple on the foul water within the harbour, or on the beautiful sea without. The line of demarcation between the two colours, black and blue, showed the point which the pure sea would not pass ; but it lay as quiet as the abominable pool, with which it never mixed. Boats without awnings were too hot to touch ; ships blistered at their moorings ; the stones of the quays had not cooled, night or day, for months. Hindoos,

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

Prussians, Chinese, Spaniards, Portuguese, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Genoese, Neapolitans, Venetians, Greeks, Turks, descendants from all the builders of Babel, come to trade at Marseilles, sought the shade alike—taking refuge in any hiding-place from a sea too intensely blue to be looked at, and a sky of purple, set with one great flaming jewel of fire.

The universal stare made the eyes ache. Towards the distant blue of the Italian coast, indeed, it was a little relieved by light clouds of mist, slowly rising from the evaporation of the sea, but it softened nowhere else. Far away the dusty vines overhanging wayside cottages, and the monotonous wayside avenues of parched trees without shade, drooped beneath the stare of earth and sky. So did the horses with drowsy bells, in long files of carts, creeping slowly towards the interior; so did their recumbent drivers, when they were awake, which rarely happened; so did the exhausted labourers in the fields. Everything that lived or grew was oppressed by the glare; except the lizard, passing swiftly over rough stone walls, and cicada, chirping his dry hot chirp, like a rattle. The very dust was scorched brown, and something quivered in the atmosphere as if the air itself were panting.

Blinds, shutters, curtains, awnings, were all closed and drawn to keep out the stare. Grant it but a chink or keyhole, and it shot in like a white hot arrow.

## AT CRAIGENPUTTOCK

JANE WELSH CARLYLE

So many talents are wasted, so many enthusiasms turned to smoke, so many lives spoiled for want of a little patience and endurance, for want of understanding and laying to heart the meaning of the *Present*—for want of recognizing that it is not the greatness or littleness of “the duty nearest hand,” but the spirit in which one does it, that makes one’s doing noble or mean! I can’t think how many people who have any natural ambition and any sense of power in them, escape going mad in a world like this without the recognition of *that*. I know I was very near mad when I found it out for myself (as one has to find out for one’s self everything that is to be of any real practical use to one).

Shall I tell you how it came into my head? Perhaps it may be of comfort to you in similar moments of fatigue and disgust. I had gone with my husband to live on a little estate of peat bog that had descended to me all the way down from John Welsh, the Covenanter, who married a daughter of John Knox. *That* didn’t, I am ashamed to say, make me feel Craigenputtock a whit less of a peat bog, and a most dreary, untoward place to live at.



## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

In fact, it was sixteen miles distant on every side from all the conveniences of life—shops and even post office. Further, we were very poor, and further (and worst), being an only child, and brought up to “great prospects,” I was sublimely ignorant of every branch of useful knowledge, though a capital Latin scholar and very fair mathematician.

It behoved me in these astonishing circumstances to learn to sew. Husbands, I was shocked to find, wore their stockings into holes, and were always losing buttons, and I was expected to “look to all that.” Also it behoved me to learn to cook! no capable servant choosing to live at such an out-of-the-way place, and my husband having bad digestion, which complicated my difficulties dreadfully. The *bread*, above all, brought from Dumfries, “soured on his stomach” (O heaven!) and it was plainly my duty as a Christian wife to bake at home.

So I sent for Cobett’s “Cottage Economy,” and fell to work at a loaf of bread. But, knowing nothing about the process of fermentation or the heat of ovens, it came to pass that my loaf got put into the oven at the time that myself ought to have been put into bed; and I remained the only person not asleep in a house in the middle of a desert.

One o’clock struck, and then two, and then three; and still I was sitting there in an immense solitude, my whole body aching with weariness, my heart aching with a sense of forlornness and degradation. That I, who had been so petted at home, whose comfort had been studied by everybody in the

## AT CRAIGENPUTTOCK

house, who had never been required to do anything but cultivate my mind, should have to pass all those hours of the night in watching a loaf of bread—which mightn't turn out bread after all! Such thoughts maddened me, till I laid down my head on the table and sobbed aloud.

It was then that somehow the idea of Benvenuto Cellini sitting up all night watching his Perseus in the furnace came into my head, and suddenly I asked myself: "After all, in the sight of the upper powers, what is the mighty difference between a statue of Perseus and a loaf of bread, so that each be the thing that one's hand has found to do? The man's determined will, his energy, his patience, his resource were the really admirable things, of which his statue of Perseus was the mere chance expression. If he had been a woman living at Craigenputtock, with a dyspeptic husband, sixteen miles from a baker, and he a bad one, all these qualities would have come out more fitly in a *good* loaf of bread."

I cannot express what consolation this germ of an idea spread over my uncongenial life during the years we lived at that savage place, where my two immediate predecessors had gone mad, and the third had taken to drink.

## TUNBRIDGE TOYS

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

I WONDER whether those little silver pencil-cases with a moveable almanac at the butt-end are still favourite implements with boys, and whether pedlars still hawk them about the country? Are there pedlars and hawkers still, or are rustics and children grown too sharp to deal with them? Those pencil-cases, as far as my memory serves me, were not of much use. The screw, upon which the moveable almanac turned, was constantly getting loose. The 1 of the table would work from its moorings, under Tuesday or Wednesday, as the case might be, and you would find, on examination, that Thursday or Wednesday was the  $23\frac{1}{2}$  of the month (which was absurd on the face of the thing), and in a word your cherished pencil-case an utterly unreliable timekeeper. Nor was this a matter of wonder. Consider the position of a pencil-case in a boy's pocket. You had hardbake in it; marbles, kept in your purse when the money was all gone; your mother's purse, knitted so fondly and supplied with a little bit of gold, long since—prodigal little son!—scattered amongst the swine—I mean amongst brandy-balls, open tarts, three-cornered puffs, and similar abominations. You had a top and string; a knife;

## TUNBRIDGE TOYS

a piece of cobbler's wax ; two or three bullets ; a " Little Warbler " ; and I, for my part, remember, for a considerable period, a brass-barrelled pocket pistol (which would fire beautifully, for with it I shot off a button from Butt Major's jacket)—with all these things, and ever so many more, clinking and rattling in your pockets, and your hands, of course, keeping them in perpetual movement, how could you expect your moveable almanac not to be twisted out of its place now and again—your pencil-case to be bent—your liquorice water not to leak out of your bottle over the cobbler's wax ; your bull's eye not to ram up the lock and barrel of your pistol, and so forth ?

In the month of June, thirty-seven years ago, I bought one of those pencil-cases from a boy whom I shall call Hawker, and who was in my form. Is he dead ? Is he a millionaire ? Is he a bankrupt now ? He was an immense screw at school, and I believe to this day that the value of the thing for which I owed and eventually paid three and sixpence, was in reality not one and nine.

I certainly enjoyed the case at first a good deal, and amused myself with twiddling round the moveable calendar. But this pleasure wore off. The jewel, as I said, was not paid for, and Hawker, a large and violent boy, was exceedingly unpleasant as a creditor. His constant remark was, " When are you going to pay me that three and sixpence ? What sneaks your relations must be ! They come to see you. You go out to them on Saturdays and



## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

Sundays, and they never give you anything ! Don't tell *me*, you little humbug !” and so forth. The truth is that my relations were respectable ; but my parents were making a tour in Scotland ; and my friends in London, whom I used to go and see, were most kind to me, certainly, but somehow never tipped me. That term, of May to August 1823, passed in agonies, then, in consequence of my debt to Hawker. What was the pleasure of a calendar pencil-case in comparison with the doubt and torture of mind occasioned by the sense of the debt, and the constant reproach in that fellow's scowling eyes and gloomy coarse reminders ? How was I to pay off such a debt out of sixpence a week ? ludicrous ! Why did not someone come to see me, and tip me ? Ah ! my dear sir, if you have any little friends at school, go and see them, and do the natural thing by them. You won't miss the sovereign. You don't know what a blessing it will be to them. Don't fancy they are too old—try 'em. And they will remember you, and bless you in future days ; and their gratitude shall accompany your dreary after life ; and they shall meet you kindly when thanks for kindness are scant. Oh mercy ! shall I ever forget the sovereign you gave me, Captain Bob ? or the agonies of being in debt to Hawker ? In that very term, a relation of mine was going to India. I actually was fetched from school in order to take leave of him. I am afraid I told Hawker of this circumstance. I own I speculated upon my friend's giving me a pound. A pound ? Pooh ! A relation



going to India, and deeply affected at parting from his darling kinsman, might give five pounds to the dear fellow ! . . . There was Hawker when I came back—of course, there he was. As he looked in my scared face, his turned livid with rage. He muttered curses, terrible from the lips of so young a boy. My relation, about to cross the ocean to fill a lucrative appointment, asked me with much interest about my progress at school, heard me construe a passage of Eutropius, the pleasing Latin work on which I was then engaged ; gave me a God bless you, and sent me back to school ; upon my word of honour, without so much as a half-crown ! It is all very well, my dear sir, to say that boys contract habits of expecting tips from their parents' friends, that they become avaricious, and so forth. Avaricious ! fudge ! Boys contract habits of tart and toffee eating, which they do not carry into after life. On the contrary, I wish I *did* like 'em. What raptures of pleasure one could have now for five shillings, if one could but pick it off the pastry-cook's tray ! No. If you have any little friends at school, out with your half-crowns, my friend, and impart to those little ones the little fleeting joys of their age.

Well, then. At the beginning of August, 1823, Bartlemytide holidays came, and I was to go to my parents, who were at Tunbridge Wells. My place in the coach was taken by my tutor's servants—" Bolt-in-Tun," Fleet Street, seven o'clock in the morning was the word. My tutor, the Reverend Edward P——, to whom I hereby present my best

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

compliments, had a parting interview with me : gave me my little account for my governor : the remaining part of the coach-hire ; five shillings for my own expenses ; and some five and twenty shillings on an old account which had been over paid, and was to be restored to my family.

Away I ran and paid Hawker his three-and-six. Ouf ! what a weight it was off my mind ! (He was a Norfolk boy, and used to go home from Mrs. Nelson's " Bell Inn," Aldgate—but that is not to the point). The next morning, of course, we were an hour before the time. I and another boy shared a hackney coach, two-and-six ; porter for putting luggage on coach, three-pence. I had no more money of my own left. Rasherwell, my companion, went into the " Bolt-in-Tun " coffee-room and had a good breakfast. I couldn't : because, though I had five and twenty shillings of my parents' money, I had none of my own, you see.

I certainly intended to go without breakfast, and still remember how strongly I had that resolution in my mind. But there was that hour to wait. A beautiful August morning—I am very hungry. There is Rasherwell " tucking " away in the coffee-room. I pace the street, as sadly almost as if I had been coming to school, not going thence. I turn into a court by mere chance—I vow it was by mere chance—and there I see a coffee-shop with a placard in the window, " Coffee, Twopence, round of buttered toast, Twopence." And here am I hungry, penniless, with five and twenty shillings of my parents' money in my pocket.

What would you have done? You see, I had had my money, and spent it in that pencil-case affair. The five and twenty shillings were a trust—by me to be handed over.

But then would my parents wish their only child to be actually without breakfast? Having this money and being so hungry, so *very* hungry, mightn't I take ever so little? Mightn't I at home eat as much as I chose?

Well, I went into the coffee-shop, and spent fourpence. I remember the taste of the coffee and toast to this day—a peculiar, muddy, not-sweet-enough, most fragrant coffee—a rich, rancid, yet not-buttered-enough, delicious toast. The waiter had nothing. At any rate, fourpence, I know, was the sum I spent. And the hunger appeased, I got on the coach a guilty being.

At the last stage—what is its name? I have forgotten in seven-and-thirty years—there is an inn with a little green and trees before it, and by the trees there is an open carriage. It is our carriage. Yes, there are Prince and Blucher, the horses; and my parents in the carriage. Oh! how I had been counting the days until this one came! Oh! how happy had I been to see them yesterday! But there was that fourpence. All the journey down the toast had choked one, and the coffee poisoned me.

I was in such a state of remorse about the fourpence that I forgot the maternal joy and caresses, the tender paternal voice. I pulled out the twenty-four shillings and eightpence with a trembling hand.

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

"Here's your money," I gasp out, "which Mr. P—— owes you, all but fourpence. I owed three-and-sixpence to Hawker out of my money for a pencil-case, and I had none left, and I took fourpence of yours, and had some coffee at a shop."

I suppose I must have been choking whilst uttering this confession.

"My dear boy," says the governor, "why didn't you go and breakfast at the hotel?"

"He must be starved," says my mother.

I had confessed; I had been a prodigal; I had been taken back to my parents' arms again. It was not a very great crime as yet, or a very long career of prodigality; but don't we know that a boy who takes a pin which is not his own, will take a thousand pounds when occasion serves, bring his parents' grey heads with sorrow to the grave, and carry his own to the gallows? Witness the career of Dick Idle, upon whom our friend Mr. Sala has been discoursing. Dick only began by playing pitch-and-toss on a tombstone: playing fair, for what we know: and even for that sin he was promptly caned by the beadle. The bamboo was ineffectual to cane that reprobate's bad courses out of him. From pitch-and-toss he proceeded to manslaughter if necessary: to highway robbery: to Tyburn and the rope there. Ah! Heaven be thanked, my parents' heads are still above the grass, and mine still out of the noose.

As I look up from my desk, I see Tunbridge Wells Common and the rocks, the strange familiar place



which I remember forty years ago. Boys saunter over the green with stumps and cricket-bats. Other boys gallop by on the riding-master's hacks. I protest it is "Cramp, Riding Master," as it used to be in the reign of George IV., and that Centaur Cramp must be at least a hundred years old. Yonder comes a footman with a bundle of novels from the library. Are they as good as *our* novels? Oh! how delightful they were! Shades of Valancour, awful ghost of Manfroni, how I shudder at your appearance! Sweet image of Thaddeus of Warsaw, how often has this almost infantile hand tried to depict you in a Polish cap and richly embroidered tights! And as for Corinthian Tom in light blue pantaloons and hessians, and Jerry Hawthorn from the country, can all the fashion, can all the splendour of real life which these eyes have subsequently beheld, can all the wit I have heard or read in later times, compare with your fashion, with your brilliancy, with your delightful grace, and sparkling vivacious rattle?

Who knows? They *may* have kept those very books at the library still—at the well-remembered library on the Pantiles, where they sell that delightful, useful Tunbridge ware. I will go and see. I wend my way to the Pantiles, the queer little old world Pantiles, where a hundred years since, so much good company came to take its pleasure. Is it possible, that in the past century, gentlefolks of the first rank (as I read lately in a lecture on George II., in the "Cornhill Magazine") assembled here and entertained each other with gaming, dancing,



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fiddling, and tea? There are fiddlers, harpers, and trumpeters performing at this moment in a weak little old balcony, but where is the fine company? Where are the earls, duchesses, bishops, and magnificently embroidered gamesters? A half-dozen of children and their nurses are listening to the musicians; an old lady or two in a poke bonnet passes; and for the rest, I see but an uninteresting population of native tradesmen. As for the library, its window is full of pictures of burly theologians, and their works, sermons, apologues, and so forth. Can I go in and ask the young ladies at the counter for "Manfroni, or the One-handed Monk," and "Life in London, or the Adventures of Corinthian Tom, Jeremiah Hawthorn, Esquire, and their friend Bob Logic?"—absurd. I turn away abashed from the casement—from the Pantiles—no longer Pantiles—but Parade. I stroll over the Common and survey the beautiful purple hills around, twinkling with a thousand bright villas, which have sprung up over this charming ground since first I saw it. What an admirable scene of peace and plenty! What a delicious air breathes over the heath, blows the cloud-shadows across it, and murmurs through the full-clad trees! Can the world show a land fairer, richer, more cheerful? I see a portion of it when I look up from the window at which I write. But fair scenes, green woods, bright terraces gleaming in sunshine, and purple clouds swollen with summer rain—nay, the very pages over which my head bends—disappear from before my eyes. They are looking backwards, back into forty years off, into a

dark room, into a little house hard by on the Common here, in the Bartlemytide holidays. The parents have gone to town for two days: the house is all his own, his own and a grim old maid-servant's, and a little boy is seated at night in the lonely drawing-room, poring over "Manfroni, or the One-handed Monk," so frightened that he scarcely dares to turn round.

## POETRY

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

POETRY is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge ; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred . . . It is the perfect and consummate surface and bloom of all things ; it is the odour and the colour of the rose to the texture of the elements which compose it, as the form and splendour of unfaded beauty to the secrets of anatomy and corruption. What were virtue, love, patriotism, friendship—what were the scenery of this beautiful universe which we inhabit ; what were our consolations on this side of the grave—and what were our aspirations beyond it, if poetry did not ascend to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar ? Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, “ I will compose poetry.” The greatest poet cannot even say it ; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness ; this power arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious

## POETRY

portions of our natures are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure . . .

Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds. We are aware of evanescent visitations of thought and feeling sometimes associated with place or person, sometimes regarding our own mind alone, and always rising unforeseen and departing unbidden, but elevating and delightful beyond all expression : so that even in the desire and regret they leave, there cannot but be pleasure, participating as it does in the nature of its object. It is as it were the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own ; but its footsteps are like those of a wind over the sea, which the coming calm erases, and whose traces remain only, as on the wrinkled sand which paves it. These and corresponding conditions of being are experienced principally by those of the most delicate sensibility and the most enlarged imagination ; and the state of mind produced by them is at war with every base desire. The enthusiasm of virtue, love, patriotism, and friendship, is essentially linked with such emotions ; and whilst they last, self appears as what it is, an atom to a universe. Poets are not only subject to these experiences as spirits of the most refined organization, but they can colour all that they combine with the evanescent hues of this ethereal world ; a word, a trait in the representation of a scene or a passion, will touch the enchanted cord, and re-animate, in those who have ever experienced these emotions, the sleeping, the cold, the buried image of the past.

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Poetry thus makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the world ; it arrests the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations of life, and veiling them, or in language or in form, sends them forth among mankind, bearing sweet news of kindred joy to those with whom their sisters abide—abide, because there is no portal of expression from the caverns of the spirit which they inhabit into the universe of things. [Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man.]



# APPROACHING BURNS'S COTTAGE

JOHN KEATS

TO

JOHN HAMILTON REYNOLDS

MAYBOLE,

11 July, 1818.

MY DEAR REYNOLDS,

. . . I am approaching Burns's cottage very fast. We have made continual inquiries from the time we saw his tomb at Dumfries. His name, of course, is known all about: his great reputation among the plodding people is, "that he wrote a good *mony* sensible things." One of the pleasantest means of annulling self is approaching such a shrine as the Cottage of Burns: we need not think of his misery—that is all gone, bad luck to it! I shall look upon it hereafter with unmixed pleasure, as I do my Stratford-on-Avon day with Bailey. I shall fill this sheet for you in the Bardie's country, going no further than this, till I get to my town of Ayr, which will be a nine miles' walk to tea.

We were talking on different and indifferent things, when, on a sudden, we turned a corner upon the immediate country of Ayr. The sight was as rich as possible. I had no conception that the native place of Burns was so beautiful; the idea I had was more desolate: his "Rigs of Barley" seemed always to me but a few strips of green on a cold

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hill—Oh, prejudice!—It was as rich as Devon. I endeavoured to drink in the prospect, that I might spin it out to you, as the silkworm makes silk from mulberry leaves. I cannot recollect it. Besides all the beauty, there were the mountains of Arran Isle, black and huge over the sea. We came down upon everything suddenly; there were in our way the “bonny Doon,” with the brig that Tam o’Shanter crossed, Kirk Alloway, Burns’s Cottage, and then the Brigs of Ayr. First we stood upon the Bridge across the Doon, surrounded by every phantasy of green in tree, meadow, and hill: the stream of the Doon, as a farmer told us, is covered with trees “from head to foot.” You know those beautiful heaths, so fresh against the weather of a summer’s evening; there was one stretching along behind the trees.

I wish I knew always the humour my friends would be in at opening a letter of mine, to suit it to them as nearly as possible. I could always find an egg-shell for melancholy, and as for merriment, a witty humour will turn anything to account. My head is sometimes in such a whirl in considering the million likings and antipathies of our moments, that I can get into no settled strain in my letters. My wig! Burns and sentimentality coming across you and Frank Floodgate in the office. Oh! Scenery, that thou shouldst be crushed between two puns! As for them, I venture the rascalliest in the Scotch region. I hope Brown does not put them in his journal: if he does, I must sit on the cutty-stool all next winter. We went to Kirk Alloway. “A prophet

is no prophet in his own country." We went to the Cottage and took some whiskey. I wrote a sonnet for the mere sake of writing some lines under the roof: they are so bad I cannot transcribe them. The man at the cottage was a great bore with his anecdotes. I hate the rascal. His life consists in fuzy, fuzzy, fuzziest. He drinks glasses, five for the quarter and twelve for the hour; he is a mahogany-faced old jackass who knew Burns: he ought to have been kicked for having spoken to him. He calls himself "a curious old bitch," but he is a flat old dog. I should like to employ Caliph Vathek to kick him. Oh, the flummery of a birthplace. Cant! cant! cant! It is enough to give a spirit the guts-ache. Many a true word, they say, is spoken in jest—this may be because his gab hindered my sublimity: the flat dog made me write a flat sonnet. My dear Reynolds, I cannot write about scenery and visitings. Fancy is indeed less than a present palpable reality, but it is greater than remembrance. You would lift your eyes from Homer only to see close before you the real Isle of Tenedos. You would rather read Homer afterwards than remember yourself. One song of Burns's is of more worth to you than all I could think for a whole year in his native country. His misery is a dead weight upon the nimbleness of one's quill; I tried to forget it—to drink toddy without any care—to write a merry sonnet—it won't do—he talked, he drank with blackguards; he was miserable. We can see horribly clear, in the works of such a man, his whole life, as if we were God's spies . . .

## THE SUN AND THE BROOK

RICHARD JEFFERIES

THE sun first sees the brook in the meadow where some roach swim under a bulging root of ash. Leaning against the tree, and looking down into the water, there is a picture of the sky. Its brightness hides the sandy floor of the stream as a picture conceals the wall where it hangs, but, as if the water cooled the rays, the eye can bear to gaze on the image of the sun. Over its circle thin threads of summer cloud are drawn ; it is only the reflection, yet the sun seems closer seen in the brook, more to do with us, like the grass, and the tree, and the flowing stream. In the sky it is so far, it cannot be approached, nor even gazed at, so that by the very virtue and power of its own brilliance it forces us to ignore and almost forget it. The summer days go on, and no one notices the sun. The sweet water slipping past the green flags, with every now and then a rushing sound of eager haste, receives the sky, and it becomes a part of the earth and of life. No one can see his own face without a glass ; no one can sit down and deliberately think of the soul till it appears a visible thing. It eludes—the mind cannot grasp it. But hold a flower in the hand—a rose, this later honeysuckle, or this the first harebell and in its beauty you can recognise your own soul reflected as the sun in the brook. For the soul finds itself in beautiful things.



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Between the bulging root and the bank there is a tiny oval pool, on the surface of which the light does not fall. There the eye can see deep down into the stream, which scarcely moves in the hollow it has worn for itself as its weight swings into the concave of the bend. The hollow is illumined by the light which sinks through the stream outside the root ; and beneath, in the green depth, five or six roach face the current. Every now and then a tiny curl appears on the surface inside the root, and must rise up to come there. Unwinding as it goes, its raised edge lowers and becomes lost in the level. Dark moss on the base of the ash darkens the water under. The light green leaves overhead yield gently to the passing air ; there are but few leaves on the tree, and these scarcely make a shadow on the grass beyond that of the trunk. As the branch swings, the gnats are driven farther away to avoid it. Over the verge of the bank, bending down almost to the root in the water, droop the heavily seeded heads of tall grasses which, growing there, have escaped the scythe.

These are the days of the convolvulus, of ripening berry, and dropping nut. In the gateways, ears of wheat hang from the hawthorn boughs, which seized them from the passing load. The broad aftermath is without flowers ; the flowers are gone to the uplands and the untilled wastes. Curving opposite the south, the hollow side of the brook has received the sunlight like a silvered speculum every day that the sun has shone. Since the first violet of the meadow, till now that the berries are ripening ;



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through all the long drama of the summer, the rays have visited the stream. The long, loving touch of the sun has left some of its own mystic attraction in the brook. Resting here, and gazing down into it, thoughts and dreams come flowing as the water flows. Thoughts without words, mobile like the stream, nothing compact that can be grasped and stayed: dreams that slip silently as water slips through the fingers. The grass is not grass alone; the leaves of the ash above are not leaves only. From tree, and earth, and soft air moving, there comes an invisible touch which arranges the senses to its waves as the ripples of the lake set the sand in parallel lines. The grass sways and fans the reposing mind; the leaves sway and stroke it, till it can feel beyond itself and with them, using each grass blade, each leaf, to abstract life from earth and ether. These then become nerve organs, fresh nerves and veins running afar out in the field, along the winding brook, up through the leaves, bringing a larger existence. The arms of the mind open wide to the broad sky.

Some sense of the meaning of the grass, and leaves of the tree, and sweet waters hovers on the confines of thought, and seems ready to be resolved into definite form. There is a meaning in these things, a meaning in all that exists, and it comes near to declare itself. Not yet, not fully, nor in such shape that it may be formulated—if ever it will be—but sufficiently so to leave, as it were, an unwritten impression that will remain when the glamour is gone, and grass is but grass, and a tree a tree.

## THE VENICE OF ENGLAND

H. J. MASSINGHAM

THAN Blakeney, on the North coast of Norfolk, there is no lonelier place in England, so lone and level that the sun vaults over it in one majestic sweep from east to west, like a grasshopper bounding over a strip of lawn. Under the cupola of the heavens the eye rests on nothing but a hut or an old hulk stranded in the mud of the tidal creeks, and they are stars in a void the emptier for them, while sky and land and sea are interpenetrated each with the other and mingle their essences in a Titan partnership which seems to be designing new worlds. Elemental birth there is, for these solitudes are the theatre of an intense energy condensed into a speck of geological time, a grandiose parade and strife of forces, a procreant urge, a crest and subsidence of being that lay bare the ferment of creation.

Blakeney Point is a narrow tongue of land built up of three great systems of the shore, sand dune, shingle beach and salting ; it runs parallel with the tidal marshes of the mainland and is separated from it by an estuary which at low tide is a river and at high an inland sea, whose either victory brings its own defeat. The sea rolls in its regiments of shingle, depositing petrified waves of it in parallel humps and furrows, fosses and ramparts against its own advance;

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the shingle creeps upon the land, but the *Pelvetia* seaweed and the campion and purslane hold it and the tough sea-blite waves its fronds, arrest it and scoop it about the matted fibres which clench the stones. The sea again flings out its flying squadrons of sand and the wiry marram grass holds it tight and presses it into the service of life-giving soil, throwing up a range of sand-hills in ten years, while the parallel ranges behind shrink as the wind bears down upon them and scatters their grains away. The columns of the waves charge upon the land and leave in their tidal drift the seeds of plants which garment sand and stone with living greens and greys. The earth in its turn casts the spray of its teeming growth into the sea's challenge. Hawkweed, dock, plantain, crowfoot, stonecrop, mayweed, catchfly, field poppy, the yellow horned poppy and bird's-foot trefoil, mindful of their ancient home; others, glaucous sea-purslane, sea-lavender, sea-aster, samphire, sea-rocket, the oyster-plant (*Mertensia-maritima*), which has a fine share of the "gallant blews" of the borage family, and the polymorphic sea-campion, with its seven varieties, some with lobed petals, others incurved—are adopted of the sea and the flowers of its garden. Sand and maritime plants seem to sink their ancient feuds against one another and themselves, and to make common cause against the sea. They live or die less by competition than by the quality of their resistance. There is no element, process or growth here that does not take from and give to its fellows, and the mobile unstable land images in every stage of

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development and decay the heave and tumble of the waves that travel in from the Pole.

And the colours of Blakeney, the Venice of England, if, as Dr. Oliver says, Venice be not the Blakeney of Italy, are truly the sparks and flares of the elemental factory. The land moves not only in the mirage of the heat-haze's undulating light and the silver-grey foliage of the sea-purslane, shifting to pink through the young leaves, like a young hare's transparent ear, and to lavender in the shadows, is a tiny reflection of the huge mobility of colour in the full landscape. The ultramarine of sky paling turquoise on the horizon and of the sea shot like silk with green; the metallic emerald of the *algæ* on the mud-flats; the umber of the sand-hills; the yellows, oranges, greens and whites of the flowers; the pearls of the shells sewn like jewels into the shingle-pelt exchange their glowing robes every minute according to the drying of the ground and the density of vapour in different places. Their flushing or pallor with all the grades of tone between seem to dramatise in their medium all the moods of passionate life, of becoming, of being and of dying. The terns are the expression of this creative power and vehemence, seen in its discharge. They are the absolute of bird-life in the sense that their inhuman loveliness, though the most highly finished of that of any bird known to me, is yet elemental, for in evolution we do not get rid of the elemental, but see further into it. They are elemental in Nature's world, as Blake is in ours, an elysian flower of the tough root of things, so fair, free and frail that



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they might well be the substance, hovering between sense and spirit, of wind, wave and "argentine vapour." If they were souls, they would yet enjoy the earth; if creatures of flesh, theirs, too, an immaterial world. At Blakeney Point and on the Salthouse marshes at its heel, some four thousand of their aery legions were nesting in 1922 among black-headed gulls, oyster-catchers, ringed plover, shell-duck and redshank. There were five species in all, the Common, the Arctic, the Sandwich, the Little and the Roseate Tern; the last (one pair) faint-blushed with rose beneath for the dazzling white of the Sandwich and the pearls of the others, with longer streamers, and even finer build, carrying tern-structure to the extremest point of art in delicacy of line and shape. A little more, one feels, and this rarest being would be resolved back into mist and spray.

Nor is he far from them, for the plumage trader and the collector have so reduced their number that the remnant find it hard to keep a foothold among the multitude of their brethren. Terns show the same nicety of differentiation in other directions. The Sandwich is as large in proportion to the Common and Arctic Terns as the Little Tern is small, more wavering on the wing, and with a crescent of white between the bill and the black cap, which so precisely adjusts and focuses in them all the relations of the white, grey and coral of legs, wings, body, and bill. The bill of the Sandwich Tern is black and the Arctic is slightly darker on the breast than the Common. These shades of difference grow more perceptible



on closer acquaintance. The Little Tern is the most aerial on its angled wing, as the Sandwich is more desultory and its strokes more powerful—in the ceremony of courtship a beautiful slow heave. In diving, the Sandwich is a lesser gannet and hurls itself sheer into the water with a plunge that flings the spray ten feet up in the air. The Little Tern stops dead in the air, hovers in its own radiance of flickered wings, twinkles them over its back with fanned and depressed tail, and half closing them in a shiver of the body casts itself (as the Common Tern rarely or never does) right under. It rises again with whitebait in a moment, like Anadyomene's charger from its submarine stable.

When the human intruder treads warily among the nests of a large tern colony, the birds in strong sunlight form a living canopy of shimmering, almost transparent web above his head, wheel through each other's ranks under the heavens, a flying carpet of broken lights taken wing, and shake out a cloud of shrill voices like the grating of the shingle in the sea's teeth. The ear tunes itself to the clamour, and the hoarse screech of the Roseate Tern, the harshest of them all, to set against its unearthly beauty, the softer *kirr-rit* of the luminous Sandwich Tern, the bright chit-chit of the Little Tern, a note like pebbles gleaming wet, and the steely guttural of the Arctic, that beats and swoops frantically a yard above my head, alone among them all for boldness, disentangle themselves like threads of different coloured silk from the fabric of woven sound. He, the Arctic, may well scream like the

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gales of his home, for with the Roseate, he has one nest of three eggs among the thousand round him, the only record, I believe, of the bird breeding so far south.

The eggs and nests of the Common Tern mirror the intense creativeness of this wilderness, even more than the mature birds embody its unrest. The eggs of the Roseate Tern are elongated and peculiarly zoned with smoky blurs. Those of the Little Tern (with a hundred or so nests) are similar in brown and grey sprinklings on a light ground to the pear-shaped egg of the Ringed Plover, and within certain variations, are fairly coherent and orderly in pattern. The birds, too, nest somewhat apart from the others. Of the eighteen nests of the Sandwich Tern, fourteen were unlined and the large, exquisitely speckled or blotched eggs on a buff, creamy or stone-coloured ground were all laid under the lee of a sand-mound. But with the eggs and nests of the Common Tern, all semblance of uniformity went to the winds, whose caresses into the sand's soft cheek seemed to have dimpled so many of their nests. Caprice in variation was alone supreme, and extended not only to the shape, colour, size and number of the eggs (two were midgets, several were four to a nest, the majority three and the rest two), but to the position, structure and materials of the nests. They were placed indiscriminately in the marram grass, on the sand of the dunes, upon dried mud, in the shingle, at the drift line, among the campion, on the turf, in the herbage, under the nodding fronds of the sea-blite, whose shadows

enriched the markings of their eggs with wandering pencils. Some were conspicuous at thirty yards, others but natural hollows in the anatomy of the ground. Some were elaborately woven of dried herbs, sticks, seaweed decorated with shells; one was embroidered with an empty capsule of beech mast, and a skate's egg-case, and stones were often placed among the eggs. A nest containing light green eggs faintly spotted was a cup of black seaweed, and on the same mound of sand a mere scrape would be cheek by jowl with a piece of architecture. Some were lacquered with broken shells in a shingle depression, and one built of small pebbles was hollowed out between three equidistant cushions of sea-rocket. Often the nests bore no sort of relation to the character or materials of the ground on which they lay, being unlined among vegetation and lined away from it, neat or tousled, shallow or deep, as pleased the individual fancy of the bridal pair who made them. As with the nests, so the eggs; nor was there a hint of correlation between the two nor between them and the ground they occupied. In ground-colour they varied from green to olive, from grey to all shades of brown between buff and vandyke, while the markings were as light as mauve or dark as chocolate. Some forms were buff, with large stains of brownish-black; others blue-green, dotted with Payne's grey. Some were heavily zoned, others dustily, others smokily, others again with a faintly stippled wash. Variations, whether of size, shape or colour, were by no means confined to clutches. One nest contained four eggs,

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each different, both in ground colour and pattern of spots, and another, dexterously compact, three eggs, one almost oval, the others pear-shaped, with one double the size of its neighbour and all individual in colouring. The print of some blotches, streaks and speckles seemed stamped into the texture of the shell, and others seemed broken shadows caught in passing. Exuberance joined with variety to make a spendthrift's holiday.

There was something so—unnatural—in it all, it was something so out of the way the wild world wags, that it set one's head chumbling over it. This prodigality in device suggested a curious harmony between the elemental and what I have a mind to call the civilized in nature. The freakishness, the whimsies, the fantasies almost, of taste in nest-construction, all the gay adventures from the adaptive and protective norm of coloration, why are they not weeded out in the struggle for existence? They are not so weeded, because there is no need to clap upon these tiny hamlets Nature's cap of darkness. It is the terns themselves who are their own defence, not earth's greens, greys, and browns. We picked up a wounded tern on the shore away from the ternery, and carried this waif and parcel of stricken element light as air to its fellows—knowing that they would feed it. A party of greater black-backed gulls drifted on ponderous wings as big as clouds among the Ariels of Nature's extra-human thought, and with a scream of rage the terns set upon them and beat them out of the nesting ground. The watcher found a rat



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on it with its skull perforated by their long, sharp bills. It is by the fellowship of mutual aid and concerted action that the terns guard their own, and thus let the djinn out of the bottle. The safety-valve of natural selection is removed and the creative force of Nature's life flowers into its full wealth of varied blossom. The theory that these diversities of nest and egg serve the secondary utility of recognition marks seems to me highly improbable, because it is the common rule among birds to find their nests by a sense of direction and locality, not of their appearance. They go by where they are, not by what they look like, and this sense is surely allied to that of the birds' destination on migration. If a bird has its home in its mind's eye ten thousand miles away and *gets there*, it has no need to name its cottage "The Dunes" to distinguish it from "The Marrams" next door. Fundamentally these vagaries are the product of each pair's choice, initiative, talent and personality roaming where they will and safe from the shears of the examining Fates.

As we passed, the birds fluttered straight down upon their nests, brooding with their breasts well forward and their tapering wings crossed at a high angle. But as they screamed and circled overhead, moving the heart like a trumpet, as they settled down behind us, a huge overarching billow of white foam, there fell a sudden hush and spell upon them. In a silence louder than their screams the whole body massed and in a long column went out like a streamer of white smoke over the dark blue sea.



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It was as though in that strange movement the curtain raised upon the play and music of elemental powers, of being, of becoming, and of dying, went down and left nothing but the uniform expanses of sky and plain.

The correlations of animate with inanimate nature are so intricate that the least oscillation of the latter from the normal will often make a wilderness of a city or a city of a wilderness. Early in 1922, the sea scored a march against its human foeman on these tidal flats and shingle beaches of Blakeney, and in an impetuous expense of its artillery hammered through a furlong of concrete wall. On one side of the turf bank running between road and beach, the land became a shallow broad scrawled over with multiform islands like the hieroglyphs on the yellow-hammer's egg, and on the other water and vegetation came to a deadlock and camped their indiscriminate forces over the ground. Into this tangle of alleys, squares and streets, where the sedges, reeds and water plants made the houses, and the water the open spaces, poured a multitude of birds and founded a city state, but that it was quilted of many nations. Long crescents of black-headed gulls, burnished by the sun, girdled the seaward frontier of the city, like crusaders after the taking of Jerusalem, and when they rose and drifted out to sea in silver clouds, the city's glittering battlements seemed to have crumbled. A cluster of immature greater black-backed gulls, the van of the

hosts which migrate along the coast in the Autumn as very symbols of the darkening days broke in from the North, and in at another gate a troop of sanderling dived in a cascade of white breasts, followed by a single knot who twisted down in the angles of lightning. A throng of cosmopolite citizens ambled the streets and squares in their several national costumes—black and grey coots in their white shields, like the cockades of some order, a gallant one judging by the number of duels, green-capped and rufous-belted sheld-duck in white cloaks slashed with black, stockish and massive-billed shovellers in green, white, chestnut and blue, with yellow spectacles like aldermen in a freecoloured Morris state, a full-plumaged scaup drake and his white-faced mate (the rarest hyperborean visitors in June) like pochard, with black torso for red or tufted duck, at a distance without the crest mincing waterhens, lapwings tourists to Venice from inland plains, herons, lank, primitive and spectral like shadows of their ancestors, swans like the figureheads and hovering terns, the guardian angels of the city, linnets airy as their notes, bustling and hallooing redshank, a tall greenshank like a redshank grown up and lost its mercurial spirits, dunlin with the black breast-band of the nuptial season, little stint like its pigmy form (the urchins of the sandpiper community) and canty ringed plover. And as initial verses to this anthology, the skirl of the sedge-warbler, the wheeze of the reed-bunting and the sweeter reed-music of the reed warbler sounded all along the rushes fringing the turf-bank.

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Place was the only unity governing this diversity, but the nurseries on the other side of the bank had an internal cohesion of common purpose. Here were two small islands almost flat with the water and shagged with tussocks of marram, other wiry grasses and coarse turf and patched with dry mud, held about eight hundred nests of Sandwich and Common Terns, black-headed gulls, ringed plover and redshank. They were mingled helter-skelter, lined or unlined, slovenly or compact, many so close together as to be semi-detached (the nine Sandwich Terns' nests were within an orbit of three yards), and with eggs so variously shaded and mottled as to make classification by size rather than pattern, colour or even shape the clue to the species. The terns' eggs and nests ran riot in idiosyncrasy, but those of the gulls were hardly less variable, spotted, zoned and splashed as they were with greys, blacks and browns of every tone, on a ground of olive-green, buff, dark-brown or blue. Gulls are of a plover-like ancestry and the black-head, diverging first to a sea-habit, then a land-habit and here breeding almost within the spray of high-tide, was with his fancy-roaming eggs and nests consistent in plasticity. One of the nests was a monument, a palace, a foot high, built on the highest point of the island and broad-based on a straddling foundation of interlacing sticks thinning to the grassy apex of the pyramid on which reposed, like a single blossom topping a bush or one lasting poem out of a lifetime of verses, a solitary egg. This pair alone among their brethren, some with mere twists of grass, had the synoptic

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view of life ; they saw it whole in one sweep from the experience of memory to the prevision of inference ; what tides have done before, spoke the tight logic of stick upon stick, tides may do again. Only the lovely treasure of the red-shank<sup>1</sup> with its background of yellow or grey or both (lighter than the lapwing's), and its rich daubs of purples and browns was concealed in the heart of a tussock, where long grasses played their shadows over it, the fingers of the wind's caress.

On the water the sheld-duck, gowned so comely and so bizarre, conducted her ducklings in their white down, banded twice with Vandyke lines, towards the mainland, the shelf between inland and outer sea, and here was an oyster-catcher's nest with the rare number of four eggs. They lay within a bowl of pebbles flattened into the dried mud, streaked and printed grey-brown on a yellowish-grey ground colour and one was double-yoked and twice the size of the others, an oddity to make itch the thievish hand of the collector. Once an egg of this same pair rolled out of its hollow nearer the water, and they swung round and round the watcher's head, wailfully *kleep-kleeping*, until he went to the nest and restored the egg. As I walked over the island the gulls hung screaming low over my head, and watched a roof woven of white wings with the azure

<sup>1</sup> All of which I was offered for a gift, so hated among the gunners is the bird, which alone of its family makes the interests of others its own, and with its clamour rouses the whole of the population in its neighbourhood, each and every tribe against their common foe.



## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

one of the world streaming through it. Here were three skies and I was marooned on a cloud in the lowest, but only the middle one lived with me, and its life was broken not only into a mosaic of moving lights, but into full a thousand entities of brain and heart and nerve and among them how many originals like that pair of gulls and oyster-catchers? The city was on one side of the bank, its corporate life on the other, for eggs and nests were safe in fancy-freedom by a common purpose of watch and ward which kept the peace within the ranks of the divers peoples (the gulls, as I was assured and could see for myself, did not touch the terns', redshanks' or plovers' eggs), and every enemy except man and the elements without.

If there is no more individual shore-bird than the redshank, there is none so personable as the ringed plover. In social flight when the flock becomes one bird they resemble sanderling, little stint and dunlin; they are home-birds and nest among the terns and gulls, as their fellow-waders (except the redshank) never do and their charming little pear-shaped eggs, three and sometimes four, are similar, but for shape and position with their narrower ends together in the middle of the nest, to the Little Tern's. They are not quite so variable in markings, but I found one nest of four eggs with one pair pigmented to type and the other, cream-coloured, without markings of any kind. The sides of the cupped nest are usually embossed with pebbles and broken shells, but I have seen a few nests among the gulls wound with grass bents. Over their native



shore they twinkle with a run which seems another phase of flight, but always more waywardly than other small shore-birds, while their plumper and squatter build gives them an inexplicable pathos. Thus they maintain a fellowship of habit with their various associates and yet preserve an essence, unique and particular of their own.

There is an infallible method of finding out whether ringed plover have eggs or young. If the former they content themselves with flying in circles round the intruder, with their soft plaints—*peep, peep*, and *toolee, toolee*. The dissyllable is the nuptial call modulated into a quavering trill, when the male weaves his flight-mazes or slides along the ground with humped back and dragging wing. But if the latter, then the female takes a leaf out of the book of the brothers Melville and becomes a Lyceum tragic actress in the convulsions of death. What epilepsy ! What throes ! She creeps along in painful spasms with one wing flapping in the air, the other lolling as though broken, and then with head half buried in the shingle, rolls over from side to side and with a last shudder, agonises into a lifeless, tumbled heap. I am a stoat ; my craving for blood is whetted and I bare my teeth as I pad after her. A last paroxysm of life spurts up in her and carries her writhing and floundering another twenty yards. A bestial possession foams the blood through my arteries and I go bounding after her—and there she is flashing her silver wings over my head with a hey-nonny-toolee, and keep you low my child till I entice him this way and that way far out of yours.

## THE APPRECIATION OF ENGLISH

Who can draw the line between the real and the unreal? They are mixed like everything else in life and if the ladies of dear, dim, Victorian days swooned with an eye open or a corner of the blind lifted, still the other, perhaps, was shut in earnest. No doubt, in its backward of time, it was just a shuddering and a frenzy to escape, thwarted by its very violence. But the shuddering was for their young as well as themselves, and in preserving the race it paid. And so impersonation of agony was grafted upon the agony itself, and the instinct of self-preservation grew into the deliberation of self-sacrifice. Perhaps, too, the suffering is worse than it was, because it is for another's sake, nor is the play a farce by over-acting, because it has been so often washed in blood.

The crouching infant three or four hours old in down of fawn and grey rucks its nape feathers over the telling black collar and shams stone, but stones do not pulsate, nor when picked up, wave stumps of wings and set off on long shanks to tumble head over ears over a rather bigger member of their order. The nest a few yards off has still the egg, but no broken shells which are carried off the nesting ground to give the younglings, one supposes, room and warmth under the parent's breast at night.

The little "dotterels," as they are called locally, are, further, much more circumspect in going on to their eggs than the terns who come home, so to speak, down the chimney. The female returns in a series of runs and pauses, retreats, approaches, goes off at a tangent, sidles nearer, swerves away again

and finally makes a dash for it and settles deeply in with a sigh rippling all over her body.

Why does nature care so profoundly for the perpetuation of her races? Oh yes, I know the obvious reasons. "I must live," she says, "and when in a million years I have pulled off a new thing, the something ahead shines with a closer light and its rays put new life into me." But I believe there is another reason she does not tell us so plainly. Change is the salt of life, but how bitter is its taste! The passing of things obsesses me with its wonder and terror. It is so simple and yet a mystery past all speculation. I set off to see the beauty of the world, knowing it can never lie. I shall see it and I have seen it, but there is no resting place between desire and memory, "the beauty coming and the beauty gone." It is coming; it is gone, but there is no staying. And I believe that nature knows this and tossed between change and eternity seeks a poise and balance between them. Each birth must be a little different from what went before, but so little different that it seems the same. So life may pass onwards and yet so gently for all but vain dreamers that the horror of that passing may be blurred and softened.

But not for the vain dreamer whose eye leaves the little dotterel on her nest, jumps over the waving beds of sea-campion, and threads its way among the hulks of the seals basking on the sand-spit. It launches out to sea and crosses the pale bar of the horizon into the immensity of space. The loneliness of the human mind is behind it and it travels further

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than any winged citizen of this busy township, contented in the fulfilment of single and commingled lives. And in eternal space that mind is at home, and builds it with cities of its own workmanship, where all our quest is ended, our frustrations undone, and as these birds know a matchless freedom of body here, so we there an equal freedom of the mind.



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